

A Companion to Celebrity

A Companion to Celebrity

Edited by

P. David Marshall and Sean Redmond

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Set in 10.5/13pt MinionPro by Aptara Inc., New Delhi, India

David Marshall:
To my loving wife Sally

Sean Redmond:

Chow Mo-wan: In the old days, if someone had a secret they didn't want to share...you know what they did?

Ah Ping: I have no idea.

Chow Mo-wan: They went up a mountain, found a tree, carved a hole in it, and whispered the secret into the hole. Then they covered it with mud and left the secret there forever.

From *In the Mood for Love* (dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2000)

To my beautiful starry eyed children, Josh, Caitlin, Erin, Dylan and Cael

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David: The book has been an interesting journey that has not only been shared by my co-editor and the wonderfully engaged contributors, but also to lesser and greater degrees by many of my research colleagues at Deakin University. I want to thank all the members of the Persona Celebrity Publics Research Group for their support and their engaged inquiry in our many meetings and discussions over the last two years. They have provided the intellectual environment that allows this kind of scholarship to flourish. In particular, I would like to thank Chris Moore, Kim Barbour, Katja Lee, Aurore Fossard, Praba Bangaroo, Kristin Demetrious, Neil Henderson, and Glenn D'Cruz: you have all been exemplary colleagues whose spirit of collaboration, support, and assistance has been deeply appreciated and valued. I would also like to thank my family – my wife Sally, my children Erin, Julia, Zak, and Paul, as well as my mother, Theo: I want all of them to know that I appreciate their support and love when my ideas, writing, organizing and editing take me away from them and absorb my time and energy.

Sean: To everyone and anyone who has ever listened to me talk about Mickey Rourke ...

Introduction

P. David Marshall and Sean Redmond

CELEBRITY INTERSECTIONS

Road, Paths, Fields, and Landscapes

From first sentence to last, the writing and editing of this book has taken over 18 months to complete. We have traveled down numerous scholarly roads during this period, making the book stronger, tighter, and more relevant as we did so. Where you start is never exactly where you end up: thinking, drafting, reviewing and revising takes you on different paths, in this instance magnified by the fact that 26 authors have been going through this shimmering, shape-shifting process with us. Celebrity culture doesn't stand still and neither did the volume as we responded to these delirious transformations as they took place while the book was being developed.

One can compare the journey of a collection like this to the trajectory of a young celebrity, seeking to make the right career decision, taking different turns to achieve that singular end. One can compare the development of a collection like this to the mindset of its editors, both of whom come from different academic traditions and who see celebrity culture intersecting in distinct and divergent ways. We have assembled a companion that speaks to academic journeying, that takes seriously the vibrant pulse of celebrity culture, and which addresses in fresh and dynamic ways those celebrity intersections that we see as important and necessary, as they manifest historically and in the folds and flows of the contemporary cultural landscape.

Our introduction is built out of these intersections: we take different turns on what the volume does, and where it might be placed within the fertile fields of celebrity. We hope you enjoy and are stimulated by this companion to celebrity.

P. David Marshall and Sean Redmond

CELEBRITY IN THE ACADEMY

On a very basic level, **this is bound to be a fascinating book.** After all, the object of study – celebrity – clearly fascinates. The media, in its various guises, are absolutely filled with stories of the famed and celebrated. Online culture in all its many mobile and social media structures continues to use celebrity as the “click-bait” to draw attention and guide the searching user through all manner of content and stories. At the same time, all this activity, all these vignettes on stars and the notorious have generally been seen by cultural critics and audiences alike as the ephemera of culture and history, the flotsam and jetsam of contemporary culture that, like a piece of sea-glass, attracts the eye but we know that in its origins had only a momentary utility that led to its current state as a discarded and forgotten fragment of an object. Celebrity is often then flashy, but in its flashiness – its very “glamour” as Gundle expresses it (2008) – it betrays its temporality in terms of value.

And yet, **for a very long time, a culture of celebrity has proclaimed its significance and – though the personalities change – it endures as a remarkable social, cultural, economic and, perhaps surprisingly, political phenomenon.** Celebrity circulates through our cultures. It migrates or more accurately invades, sometimes without any resistance by borders and languages. Thus, in 2014 the name Justin Bieber was equally known in China as it was in his native Canada. Celebrities connect to our own identities and our own sense of selves and thereby inhabit an inner-sense of meaning and, occasionally for fans, an outer-sense of proclamation of their personal and collective significance (Redmond 2014). **Celebrities are sometimes the conduit for comprehending our world or for someone trying to comprehend cultural values around gender, youth, or class and how these are re-presented through celebrities. Indeed, celebrities operate as a transcendence of categorization in their obvious display of their uniqueness, their singularity and their public visibility and thereby serve as the locus of debate about all forms of cultural codes, etiquette and discussion of what is “normal” and acceptable.**

value

This dialectic of ephemera and very clear value is intriguing and perhaps this puzzling conundrum has operated as a stimulus for the growth of the study of celebrity by academics and intellectuals as much as by popular pontificators. The entirety of this book has been written by **university-related academics.** They have approached its study from a wealth of directions and disciplines that further **identify the impact of celebrity culture.** Before we further reveal the contents of this book, it is worthwhile to identify how celebrity has migrated into academic study and how this Companion has led to a collection of the most innovative and current scholarship on a phenomenon that is enduringly fascinating.

Universities and Celebrities: A Long Historical Association

Celebrity culture had invaded many aspects of politics and culture long before academics actually began studying the phenomenon with any degree of intensity, and indeed had invaded the academy by the mid-twentieth century if not earlier. A

remarkably understudied area of celebrity study is how universities began using the famous for their own ends. On a basic level, universities have always been in an industry obsessed with impact: they want their individual location to be noticed, their impact and prestige to be recognized and their “work” valued, and thus they have consistently wanted to be attached to those who were most visible in many domains of public activity. Thus, for centuries they have been the place for the provocative lecture and the site of invitation to the most famous literary or performing arts star. Moreover, the drive for fame at universities of the highest level has been collecting winners of prestigious prizes such as Nobel Laureates. Admittedly these attempts at creating attention and fame by universities were couched in other educational, social and cultural values; nonetheless, universities along with many institutions of business, culture, entertainment and politics played in the same arena of a sophisticated attention economy and worked very hard at building prestige and impact through the personalities they associated with it as an institution. Their actions in inviting recognized figures from other professions and other walks of life was a simple and basic form of celebrity cultural production in and of itself as it pulled the person from their place of skill or achievement and into the orbit of the individual university for a celebration and not something directly related to their work or achievement.

In a much more systematic way, the relationship between celebrities and universities was built through the system of honorary degrees and doctorates where the individual university reached out beyond its borders to connect to some prominent individual. It is one of those surprisingly mundane practices of universities that made them less monastic and more “worldly” in their desires and interests. The honorary degree emerged in Oxford and Cambridge in the fifteenth century and parallel processes occurred in many of the European universities in the following centuries (Heffernan and Jons 2007: 390). In research that explored the use of honorary degrees in Nordic universities, Dhondt explains that the practice was designed to connect the university to the nation and the community through anniversary celebrations; but its expansion in the nineteenth century then was a form of connection outward that made the event richer, particularly in relation to the royalty present. Ultimately, Dhondt explains, “the degrees also acted as relational gifts and expressions of political and cultural relationships, rather than acknowledgment of an individual’s academic prowess” (Dhondt 2014: 92). And so even in universities some 200 years ago, nonacademic reasons such as cultural value and visibility were an essential part of the ceremonies that universities produced.

By the twentieth century, the conferment of honorary degrees and doctorates had become standard practice for each graduation in many universities in North America and Europe. For instance, Oxford handed out 1,487 honorary doctorates during the century (Heffernan and Jons 2007: 391). By 1950, both Cambridge and Oxford had standardized their practices and awarded eight to ten a year. What became remarkable was the emergence of stars and celebrities in the pantheon of honorary doctorates, and the practice increased over the twentieth century. Cambridge achieved some notoriety in 1962 by conferring an honorary degree on the film comedian Charlie Chaplin. But this momentary celebration of the popular in universities is

dwarfed by the practices of most universities in the United States and the United Kingdom.

By the last three decades of the twentieth century, the award of honorary doctorates to popular music performers, television personalities or film stars was no longer an exception, but a rule. For example, one institution, California State University (CSU), began its practice by awarding John F. Kennedy, often considered the first celebrity politician, its first honorary doctorate in 1962. By the 1990s and 2000s, CSU was handing out awards to the chef Julia Child (2000) and film and TV stars Nicholas Cage (2001), Bill Cosby (1992) and Danny Glover (1997). Although its policy for honorary doctorates was not dissimilar to Cambridge or Oxford – it gave awards to the “distinguished” in particular fields, and the person had to be “widely recognized” – it is clear that the university was drawn to the entertainment industries to produce visible personalities for its convocation ceremonies, and the idea of “widely recognized” trumped any other value.

Some individual celebrities literally collected honorary degrees in a way that gave them the positive visibility similar to film premieres and endorsing perfume. Bill Cosby, a recipient of an honorary doctorate from CSU in 1992 along with literally dozens over his lifetime, received five doctorates between 2009 and 2014 from Marquette, Boston University, University of San Francisco, California Polytechnic, and St Paul’s College. This kind of frequency of awards makes university graduations yet another prominent stop or possibility in a managed “attention economy” career. Meryl Streep, clearly an A-list star, received doctorates as early as 1983 from Yale and as late as 2009 and 2010 from Princeton and Harvard respectively; clearly the universities’ reputations dovetail beautifully with the actor’s credentials. Similarly, Oprah Winfrey received honorary doctorates from the prestigious Princeton in 2002 and Duke University in 2009 (Meyers 2013).

It is also not true that universities avoid controversial celebrities with somewhat dubious reputations. The boxer Mike Tyson received an honorary doctorate from the Central State University in Ohio in 1989, while the controversial cricket player and celebrity Shane Warne was awarded a doctorate for his contribution to cricket from Southampton Solent University in the UK in 2006. When one realizes that the Aerosmith lead-singer Steve Tyler, the “celefiction” (Nayar 2009) star Kermit the Frog, and Kylie Minogue (who was awarded a Doctorate in Health Sciences for her aid in breast cancer awareness by Anglia Ruskin University in the UK) have received these apparently significant honorific awards and achievements (Saunders and Thomas 2011; Douglas and Sastry 2012), it becomes evident that universities have been well aware of the meaning and significance of celebrity far in advance of their legitimizing their study in their disciplines.

Along with the practice of bestowing honorary doctorates, one can see that celebrities were given outside legitimacy in a very similar way by the state and royalty over the same period. Henry Irving was the first actor to be knighted in 1895 (*The Speaker* 1895), but by the mid-twentieth century, bestowing knighthoods on celebrities became an almost yearly ritual, including Paul McCartney in 1997, Alec Guinness in 1959, Laurence Olivier in 1947, Tom Jones in 2006, and Bono in 2007 (Ranker 2014). Indeed, even France’s Napoleonic system of the Légion d’Honneur

has been granted to the most famous domestic and international stars of entertainment.

Studying Celebrity – Seriously

In a sense, this book is recognition of the very significance of celebrity within our culture. It is a moment of contemplative reflection on the capacity of the celebrity to migrate and comfortably camp as a way of being in all sorts of dimensions of contemporary life. It is interesting that the university and the state deployed this “power” of celebrity regularly and often; but then again, those in positions of power are perhaps more aware of these different ways in which power and influence manifest and move through cultures and societies.

This book also identifies what could be described as the maturation of a field of study within the academy. The study of celebrity, as becomes apparent in reading the short biographies of our contributors, has emerged in a variety of disciplines that have advanced in universities over the last 50 to 80 years – an almost delayed doppelganger of how celebrity itself has with various degrees of legitimacy migrated through our cultures. Although one will see some older nineteenth-century disciplines such as political science, social history, literary studies and sociology, for the most part the emergence of the study of celebrity has arisen in the “new” disciplines of the academy. At the core of its study are fields such as Film Studies, where Richard Dyer’s seminal text *Stars* would first have been explored in 1979, with precursors coming from the comparative film and literary work of Barthes in 1957 (1993: 56–7) and the sociology of media research by Edgar Morin (1972). From literary studies, our closest authors in this collection are Loren Glass, Pramod Nayar and Graeme Turner. Writers such as Barry King, Gaylyn Studlar, Diane Negra, Matt Hills, and Sean Redmond in this collection have strong affiliations with film (and television, the later interloper) studies, although I am sure this characterization does not completely match their interdisciplinary toolkits for the study of celebrity. Another active pole for the study of celebrity has been communication studies, particularly as it has been inflected and refracted by cultural studies in various intellectual cultures internationally. This intersection describes some of the intellectual origins of some of our contributors such as Liza Tsaliki, Graeme Turner, Fred Inglis, Douglas Kellner, Jaap Kooijman, Sean Redmond, Alison Hearn, David Marshall, and Andrew Tolson. Connecting strongly with this tradition is a kind of scholarship which is related to technology and culture and is often grouped around media and digital media in some way and operates as another influential source for the study of celebrity. In this collection, writers such as Alice Marwick, Toija Cinque, and Misha Kavka along with David Marshall and Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff identify this particular direction of celebrity studies that often further aligns directly with studies in consumer culture and what is often called self-branding. What can be discerned is the transdisciplinary scholarship in the collection and within the works of our contributors. Many rely on strong traditions in sociology, social theory, political studies and media ethnography, such as David Andrews, Joke Hermes, Chris

Rojek, Kerry Ferris, Olivier Driessens, Saeko Ishita, David Andrews, Victor Lopes, Steven Jackson, Andrew Cooper, Ellis Cashmore and Nick Couldry; but their work has clearly challenged some of the conventions in those disciplines as they have explored the formations of cultural power and significance in provocative ways. And because of the position of celebrity in contemporary culture, gender and feminist studies has also been a natural home for its study as well: by my estimation more than half of our contributors would claim this tradition as another intellectual source and resource for their work on celebrity. In all, this book describes the structured formation of an area of investigation that in this stage of its development is beginning to produce clear differentiations in research and study, possibly specifically because of these intersections of intellectual traditions that have informed its analysis.

How celebrity studies has developed beyond these individual scholars is worthy of an explanation because it really defines how this book came into being. From the emergence of collections of works by Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (Holmes and Redmond 2006 and Redmond and Holmes 2007), Thomas Austin and Martin Barker (2003), Christine Gledhill (1991), and David Marshall (2006), among others, it became clear that there was a need to build better exchange and intellectual communication channels among scholars of related research. Many of these collections included new work as much as they identified the kinds of writing and scholarship on stardom and public personalities that had accumulated through other journals, sections of books, and research in the related disciplines. At the same time, serious levels of scholarship were building through series devoted to particular stars, celebrities and public individuals, as well as emerging collections that related to the work by celebrities in areas defined as “celebrity activism” and politics (for example, Corner and Pels 2003). Single-authored works had been expanding since Gamson’s *Claims to Fame* (1994) and Marshall’s *Celebrity and Power* in 1997 (Marshall 2014), with Graeme Turner’s *Understanding Celebrity* in 2004 (Turner 2013) and Rojek’s *Celebrity* (2001) in particular impacting the expansion of the teaching of celebrity culture in universities.

The burgeoning field of celebrity studies required a real forum for debate and a place for a more developed exchange of ideas across media forms and professional and cultural practices, as well as an arena where the idea of the audience and the fan and their relationship to stardom and celebrity could be explored with greater depth and consistency. In the first decade of the twenty-first century a series of conferences on celebrity appeared internationally that further identified that a critical level of scholarship was already engaged with the study of public personalities.

In 2010, the journal *Celebrity Studies* was launched and quickly fulfilled the needed role of intellectual exchange in the investigation of celebrity. My co-author, Sean Redmond, along with Su Holmes and James Bennett laid the groundwork to produce what has generally been regarded as one of the most influential and successful new journals of the last decade by its press, Taylor & Francis. Its forum section allowed the journal to nimbly relate to new debates around celebrity that had emerged in popular culture, while its articles attracted the best celebrity scholarship.

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One of its successes has been its capacity to explore new directions in its study and, like the prehistory of celebrity scholarship, allow the streams of intellectual discourse from a range of disciplines to intersect and interplay within and between its articles. There is no question that the two major international conferences sponsored by the journal in 2012 and 2014 derived their influence and value from the journal itself. The cumulative impact of both the journal and the conferences has been substantial.

This book has tried to address some of the major conceptual themes that have driven the intellectual vitality of celebrity studies and made it now an essential part of the intellectual environment of many universities, countless courses, and a variety of disciplines. Celebrity in all its guises, from a form of promotion and an elemental component of the attention economy to a burgeoning channel to investigate political, economic, mediated and popular culture, is a complicated phenomenon. The themes of the eight parts we have chosen to organize this complexity are an attempt to capture the rich density of the research and thinking related to public personalities.

How the Companion Makes Sense of Celebrity: The Parts and Their Intellectual Roots

It is useful to summarize the logics of these constellations of thought defined by our eight part-titles and how they relate to key cultural theories in the contemporary academy. For instance, research that relates to affect and emotion has been grouped around the idea of “Emotional Celebrity,” although these concepts float in and out of other parts such as “Celebrity Identification.” In a similar vein, we labeled our first part “Genealogy of Celebrity” in its capacity to identify the historical presuppositions that informed the expansion of celebrity culture. But the continuities and discontinuities of historically engaged research are at play in many other essays that can serve as intellectual responses to those approaches in the Genealogy section. Another area of inquiry relates to the political economy of celebrity and this is conveyed most directly in the part entitled “Celebrity Value”; however, political economy also informs some of the research in “The Publics of Celebrity” and is an evident element in “Celebrity Screens/Technologies of Celebrity.” The implications of technological transformations of cultural forms of celebrity are best looked for in this Screens/Technologies part, as you would expect, but also figure prominently in at least some of the chapters in “Celebrity Value.” One of the most complex cultural themes we try to address is globalization and we have grouped four fascinating case study articles in the part entitled “Global Celebrity.” Like other key concepts, globalization is certainly not contained within this part: it is clearly a central concern in two of the essays in the Identification part and is identified in a transnational way in two further articles in “Celebrity Embodiment.” We tried to address constitutions of collective identity such as audience, ethnicity and gender in the part on Embodiment, and the one on Identification operated as the site where these characterizations were put into both fan contexts and individual forms of public expression.

Just from this brief summarizing of the ideas coursing through the “veins” of our 26 following chapters in their eight parts, one can see that this Companion to the study of celebrity engages with most of the key social, political and economic issues that envelope the arts, social sciences and humanities disciplines in the academy. It is a valuable primer in understanding how the public form of individuality is constituted and evaluated. It will serve equally as an interesting pathway to many other disciplines even as it represents the definitive volume on the study of celebrity. The academy has now benefited from these scholars and scholarship in a way that I can only hope outweighs their use of celebrities for honorary doctorates. Like the discovered piece of sea-glass that is collected by the beachcomber, celebrity continues to both fascinate and be revalued. This Companion with its many insights by its contributors adds a quite different value to the enduring luster of celebrity.

P. David Marshall

CELEBRITY COMPANIONS

Philosophy begins in wonder. And, at the end, when philosophic thought has done its best, the wonder remains

Alfred North Whitehead

Su Holmes and I first introduced to our writing the idea of the academic celebrity in our edited collection *Framing Celebrity* (2006). We used a keynote delivery by Richard Dyer to illustrate how and why the stardust of the age fell heavily on gifted academics presenting their work on great stages in front of adoring delegates. At this year’s 2014 Celebrity Studies Conference, held at Royal Holloway University in London, Su and I had our own uneasy sense of the minority fame that academia can bring.

We were asked by one of the delegates to sign or autograph a copy of our *Framing Celebrity* collection. The autograph has a long tradition in stardom and celebrity; it personalizes and memorializes the copy, postcard, letter, or photograph; and in being asked to sign it one is been given recognition and renown. It also humanizes the encounter, and in this context suggested the work had import and impact for the person holding the copy. Our book was their celebrity companion.

We appreciated the gesture very much so when I say Su and I were uneasy about being asked to sign the copy, I do so out of a sense of our own humility; the self-doubt we have about our work; our own imperfect identity positions; and because the work isn’t just ours but belongs also to the great writers who fill its pages with insight and texture. Nonetheless, the request got me thinking about companions and companionship and about the idea of the celebrity companion, a set of related themes and instances I would now like to take up within the context of liquid modernity and its aching, lonely neoliberal form of individualism. I will ultimately suggest that we live in the vexing age of the culture of the companion, within which this volume will sit.

Su and I are not just professional colleagues but close friends. During our friendship we have faced many trials and tribulations together; anorexia nervosa, break-ups, divorce, bouts of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. We have shared many moments of joy and celebration; births, love affairs, and clubbing, where we would wildly dance to 1970s retro pop in seedy clubs on the wrong side of town. Professionally, we have now worked together in the area of stardom and celebrity through two edited collections, co-authored articles, and in the work we do as editors and co-founders of the journal *Celebrity Studies*. We are companions, then, in the many senses of the word: through these shared experiences, good and bad, foul weather and sunshine, we have stayed the course of true friendship. Truth be told though, we have used stardom and celebrity to maintain and sustain that relationship, particularly because we live and work thousands of miles apart. To make a play on words, Su and I are celebrity companions; it is the talk, chatter, discussion and fandom about fame that has enabled us to keep in touch, and to share with each other the more intimate parts of our lives. We are able to hold each other close because of celebrity companionship. This, I will suggest, is one of the great overarching stories of the contemporary age.

Many relationships and bonds are forged in similar ways: stars and celebrities can provide the interest “glue” that can bring people together in the first place; ongoing fandom can provide the social setting for a range of shared (subcultural) activities to take place and it can provide a rationale or logic for life choices that can be made; and one’s memories, spectacle events, and rituals can be marked by the inclusion or incorporation of celebrity texts and contexts. Celebrities are our common companions; they are a key “narrative” in the intimacies we make, and in the stories we tell and share. As I have argued, we story the world through celebrity (Redmond 2014).

That said, we are supposedly living in the age of loneliness, in which we have fewer companions, and where networks are broken down or rendered virtual and ephemeral. In the age of loneliness we are supposedly self-driven isolates, caught in the self-reflexive glare of narcissism, and we suffer, suffer terribly as a consequence. In his article “The age of loneliness is killing us” (2014), George Monbiot writes:

Three months ago we read that loneliness has become an epidemic among young adults. Now we learn that it is just as great an affliction of older people. A study by Independent Age shows that severe loneliness in England blights the lives of 700,000 men and 1.1m women over 50, and is rising with astonishing speed ... Social isolation is as potent a cause of early death as smoking 15 cigarettes a day; loneliness, research suggests, is twice as deadly as obesity. Dementia, high blood pressure, alcoholism and accidents – all these, like depression, paranoia, anxiety and suicide, become more prevalent when connections are cut. We cannot cope alone. Yes, factories have closed, people travel by car instead of buses, use YouTube rather than the cinema. But these shifts alone fail to explain the speed of our social collapse. These structural changes have been accompanied by a life-denying ideology, which enforces and celebrates our social isolation. The war of every man against every man – competition and individualism, in other words – is the religion of our time, justified by a mythology of lone rangers, sole traders, self-starters, self-made men and women, going it alone. For the most social of creatures,

who cannot prosper without love, there is no such thing as society, only heroic individualism. What counts is to win. The rest is collateral damage.

Zygmunt Bauman takes a similar position where he outlines how late modernity has stripped away a range of solid connections to be replaced with floating networks, neo-tribes without emancipation, and just-in-time consumption demands that govern all aspects of our lives, including love and intimacy (2000).

It is not that I would like to simply contest these observations – in previous writing I have made similar claims – but I do think that loneliness and companionship operate in a dialectic relationship. They are the systolic and diastolic forces of the beating heart of contemporary culture. They are hegemonic intensities that play out against one another, competing for supremacy or dominance but ever reliant upon one another. And celebrity culture sits at the center of this contest over companionship and loneliness; it helps dynamize this companion culture, even if – as I have also argued – it can create the conditions for intimacy and isn't simply a "room" where lonely people go to belong and to find meaning (Redmond 2014). One can find meaningful companionship in and through celebrity, a point I will take up at the end of this introduction.

Through a range of popular, artistic, scientific and academic representations and discourses we are repeatedly told and shown that we live lonely lives. Report after report informs us that the crisis of the age is loneliness. Films, songs, novels, chat shows, dramas, television reports, and documentaries provide an intertextual narrative about isolation and anomie in today's fast-paced and disconnected world. We have been asked for decades now,

So many lonely people, where did they all come from?

The 2013 film *Under the Skin*, directed by Jonathan Glazer, would be a perfect metaphoric exploration of this epidemic and epidermis of loneliness. An unnamed, alien seducer (Scarlett Johansson) lures single, isolated men back to her house where they are submerged in a liquid tar and where their bodies are then slowly consumed by an unknown force. The film's cruising scenes are set in the industrial and urban wastelands of Scotland, Glasgow in particular. The seducer drives a van around the city estates and its empty roads, but also through the teeming metropolis where movement seems both accelerated and dead slow, as if time is out of kilter. The film's architecture, its somber materiality and its oppressive mise-en-scène help create the spatial conditions of brute and fragmented loneliness. The liquid tomb in which the men drown captures perfectly the sense that modern life is permeable, boundaryless even as the opportunity to connect and expand connections is never really there. The men drown in the isolated and isolating conditions of liquid modernity just at the moment they dreamed of, and were close to getting, sexual intimacy.

Scarlett Johansson's character is also eventually caught in this cauldron of anomie. She stares blankly at herself in a mirror, misrecognizing who she really is. She examines her body as if it doesn't belong to her (which it doesn't, it has been lifted off a corpse), capturing the sense that the self is a project that can be made, reengineered,



in an age of consumer products and surgical transformations. She tries to have an intimate relationship with a man in the film but they cannot consummate their feelings – one has forgotten simply how to connect; and she is alien, Other, but so is everyone in the film. The Other is the specter of loneliness.

This is very much an anti-star performance by Johansson: she appears with little glamour, and draws upon a range of authentic performance codes that suggest a hyperrealist embodiment is being presented. This is a performance that seems to out the artifice of stardom and what stardom can do to the actor who is caught in its glare. Through her performance, Johansson seems to be addressing the loneliness of stardom itself.

Such loneliness compels us to seek companionship, and here is the critical, “circular” turn I would now like to make. The more discourses of loneliness operate, the more we hear about the forces of companionship. What emerges, promotes and energizes companionship is the rhetoric of loneliness. Self-help groups, hobby and interest groups, companion literature, local and national initiatives around making and sustaining connections emerge. We are told to be less lonely, to seek and make more contacts; and we are offered texts, settings and portals which enable us to enter, to take part, in this culture of companionship. At the same time as we are told loneliness is rife, we are shown where and how companionship can be made real. Companionship becomes the new myth of the “center,” and to reiterate, celebrity culture sits at its regal core.

Celebrity culture offers us companionship; it is the regenerating plasma that will end our loneliness. Celebrities are often *anything but lonely*, their consumption lifestyles and networks suggest a life of rich connectivity. Their companionship is inviting and seductive, and it offers forms of intimacy through the way it communicates in sensuous forms of expression. We don’t have to be lonely. We can find real and meaningful companionship in, with and through our celebrities. In a postsecular age perhaps it is only in and through celebrities that we can find solace and tactility.

Even when celebrities are signified as lonely, sufferers of depression, addiction, or other mental health problems, they offer us the space to collectively share so that we are not isolated sufferers. They are higher order healers and soothsayers whose wonderment lifts us up and out of ourselves so that we can be productive citizens and workers. The neoliberal sleight of hand here is quite remarkable. Our individualist lives can be maintained, we can develop selfhood that is goal driven, but we can connect with celebrities, who also propagate the neoliberal will to produce and consume. We can be terribly lonely and deliriously connected *at the same time*. Or can we?

There is another way to understand this paradoxical together-but-all-alone narrative, one connected to self-agency and the senses, to embodiment and productive selfhood. This is the age of the culture of companionship because ethically as human beings we gather around matter that socializes us, that draws us into affective realms of connectivity. This socializing celebrity (Holmes and Redmond 2014) is not slave or master to loneliness, it is never simply in the employ of neoliberalism, and neither is it the river through which liquid modernity singularly runs. It offers transgressive and liberating possibilities since in the social space of celebrity companionship there

are multiple, divergent stories being told and spoken. Celebrities also enchant the world, offering us images and explorations that counter and contradict the rhythm of neoliberalism. In drawing attention away from the poetics of loneliness they actually enable us to see it for what it really is – the product of a nasty age of competition and scarcity, of winners and losers, haves and have-nots ...

One can think of the architecture of this book, the parts it contains, and the chapters within them, as speaking – even if obliquely – to this dialectic of companionship and loneliness. In different and divergent ways celebrity is understood as that which limits self and selfhood, or creates the conditions for new affective economies to emerge. Global versus national, core versus periphery, care versus competition, ambassadors versus activists, achieved versus attributed, ideology versus intimacy, virtual versus the real, commodity versus authenticity, all operate along an axis where what is at stake is the meaning and quality of contemporary life itself. This book is an ethical companion to celebrity.

However, structurally speaking, I think of the collection not in terms of its discrete parts, neatly packaged and assembled in a linear fashion, but as a rich tapestry, woven and matted together. Its patterns and relations work on their own terms but they are always in consort and communication with one another; ideas found in one chapter are born again in another; theoretical ideas and illustration flow in and between the various parts, their entanglements beautifully arranged and crafted. The book should be read as a beautiful mosaic. This book is an aesthetic companion to celebrity.

This is a political and poetic companion to celebrity, inviting into its home the very best friends and colleagues who bring with them the best travelers' tales, stories of curiosity, and incandescent intellectual wonder.

The study of celebrity begins in wonder. And, at the end, when critical thought has done its best, the wonder remains...

Sean Redmond

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Part One

The Genealogy of Celebrity

Introduction

P. David Marshall

Using the term *genealogy of celebrity* as opposed to the *history* of celebrity for this opening part is quite deliberate. It was Foucault via Nietzsche who used the concept of genealogy to describe some of his method. Genealogy for Foucault was designed to dismantle history in many ways in order to identify the relationship that particular formations of knowledge had to power (Foucault 1977). For Foucault, there was no transcendental truth or set of facts. He saw his essential genealogical work as identifying the patterns of discourse with which a certain idea or practice came into being. By revealing how the particular idea was substantiated by certain structures of knowledge, Foucault identified a relationship to power and not something that was inherently correct or true (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 101–204). Thus his analysis of the birth of the prison was an exploration of the discourses that allowed the kind of practice that supported the institutions called prisons to form (Foucault 1979a). Similarly, his genealogy of nineteenth-century sexuality was to reveal that our interpretation of Victorian prudishness, which he called “the repression hypothesis,” actually referred to an era that produced an obsessive relationship to sex and sexuality and polymorphous sexuality (Foucault 1979b: 17–35). His development of parallel interpretations of a particular period was an analysis of the practices of power through discourse.

If we think of the genealogy of celebrity then we can see it as an interesting discourse that has similar relations to knowledge and power as the formation of the prison or even the different ways in which sexuality was deployed in different eras. Celebrity for many researchers has some clear relationship to modernity; but even more than this, celebrity is closely associated with the emergence of contemporary media over the last two centuries. For instance, Fred Inglis in his chapter that opens Part One links celebrity to the birth of media and industrialization when the formation of a different industry of culture helped congeal a related system of fame and celebrity. Although not identical to Inglis’s approach, Braudy’s extensive study

of fame is able to make claims that the systems of renown were differently constituted in different eras (Braudy 1986). Our contemporary era therefore appoints a unique system of fame that dovetails with its cultural needs and perhaps its political directions.

If celebrity is somehow linked discursively to formations of power, what kind of relationship to power does the idea of this public individuality convey? How has it been deployed in the last two centuries? The prevalent discourse around celebrity is that it is insignificant. As opposed to Thomas Carlyle's mid nineteenth-century delineation of what defined a hero – where the sheer action of an individual changed history and transformed lives and nations (Carlyle 1993) – celebrity represents something of an antithesis. Celebrity has become a way to identify public visibility, but also underlines how that visibility itself is not an achievement or clear accomplishment. This contradictory discourse of both value and valuelessness makes deciphering how celebrity connects to power a little more difficult.

On closer inspection, **celebrity as a discursive formation** is aligned to a great number of interests that identify its relationship to power. First, there is something in the genealogy of celebrity that intrinsically underlines the instability and value of identity itself. Celebrity's emergence is exactly connected to a period when class and status have been undergoing an enormous transformation. Writers such as Stephen Gundle in his analysis of glamour points to the way the emergence of highly visible courtesans in the nineteenth century is a symbolic marker of the decline of the aristocracy and the emergence of a new industrial class unhinged from previous constructions of power (2008: 78–108). In our collection, this sense of the allure of instability, of a celebration of the capacity of an individual to express change, is present in the analysis by Gaylyn Studlar of key figures of the nineteenth century, such as the French actor and performer Sarah Bernhardt and the intriguing dandy Beau Brummell, not aristocratic but appealing to related elites. In a similar vein, there is something that celebrates the uncontainable in Inglis's study of Byron and Loren Glass's interpretation of the cultivation of branded identity in the American author Mark Twain.

A genealogical analysis of celebrity identifies two key elements which have served as incredibly important discourses linked to power in the last two centuries. First, celebrities collectively allow the production and reproduction of a discourse of **infinite variability and diversity**. Superficially, celebrity then serves to represent the significance of individuality and personality as a new supersession of the value of class and status. With perhaps greater discursive force, celebrity also becomes the embodiment of the possibility of change through a consumer culture. Interestingly, celebrity then becomes malleable enough to become significant for the expression of individuality in contemporary China as much as contemporary Europe or North America. In a number of political systems, as some of the chapters in Part Four on Global Celebrity further accentuate, celebrity structures flourish precisely because they represent possibility, transformation and the sense and sensibility of change itself. Simultaneously, the kind of change that celebrity produces within these varied systems rarely produces radical or revolutionary change. Celebrities then generally are effective at sustaining polities rather than threatening them. Similarly, celebrities

serve to sustain corporate structures rather than dismantling them, because their formation of individuality is a variation of other forms of consumer goods and identities; moreover, celebrities as a form of individuality generally emerge from corporatized media structures that work to perpetuate and privilege consumer cultural practices.

Genealogically, there is a second element that links celebrity to power: celebrity identifies a very elaborate and expanding discourse of visibility and recognition. What is developed through celebrities is a rather new and contemporary system of value. As the chapters in Part Three on Celebrity Value isolate (in particular, see Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff's chapter "From celebrity to influencer"), visibility and recognition have expanded in significance over these last two centuries as well. Recognition's growth in significance is linked to our highly mediatized culture, where the extension of the self into the public world has been a source of at least a sense of greater impact. Whether in the world of entertainment or politics, for instance, recognizable visibility shapes cultural production as much as political success. Celebrities embody and express what can be called a **mediatized identity**: they are personas that are both produced and promulgated through forms of exhibition that are highly dependent on particular media. For instance, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody of the Wild West Show in the nineteenth century, explored in Gaylyn Studlar's chapter in this part, was dependent on the circulation of his image through the novelization and selling of the books of his exploits. These extensions of his Wild West Show ensured that his image and public presence preceded his physical appearance. For Charles Dickens, as identified by Loren Glass in his chapter, the serialization of his novels in magazines was twinned with his highly promoted book tours as his mediatized presence as a novelist supported the selling of his many novels.

While the nineteenth century produced a system of visibility that was dependent on the media technology of print, the twentieth century developed new systems of visibility through the media of radio, film and television that produced corresponding mediatized identities. Each medium generated slightly different constellations of visible personalities that worked collectively as our public personality system throughout the century. In the last 25 years, we can see that a further mediatized identity via online culture and mobile media has been emerging that is **reconfiguring contemporary culture's discourse on visibility, individualization, and recognition**.

Part One's exploration of the genealogy of celebrity provides a fascinating reading of how **individuality, visibility, recognition and public identity have been developed, mutated, and expressed through our changing constellation of stars and celebrities**. In our opening chapter, "**The moral concept of celebrity**: a very short history told as a sequence of brief lives," Fred Inglis spans the development of the celebrity system as it transforms from previous systems of influence and power. For Inglis, renown expresses the kind of connected expression of a public self in the premodern, preindustrial era as he uses the first Queen Elizabeth to express the sanctity of the public individual. He makes the argument there is a different kind of morality in the uses and deployment of celebrity when the city replaces the court as the organizer of value, influence and visibility in the nineteenth century. He continues to work through the meaning of the celebrity into the twentieth century through a gallery of

recognizable personalities. What he attempts to do with this array of public individuals is to differentiate them beyond the term celebrity and to discern their other values, their relative and quite diverse structures of morality and character, and to develop a terminology of how a culture invests in and divests itself of their expressions of individuality.

In the provocatively titled, “Brand names: a brief history of literary celebrity,” Loren Glass focuses on the emergence of a celebrity discourse in the publishing industry as much as in the reading public. Glass identifies certain flows in the production of the celebrated author over the last two centuries. The key flow was how story and author intersected in an autobiographical mix that served to brand stories and authors in a marketable synergy. Thus Byron, Dickens and Twain become examples of how the self is marketed into a visible icon that allows Byron to take on political causes, Dickens to produce a widely successful persona on speaking tours, and the pen name Twain to overwhelm Samuel Clemens as the authorial persona subsumes the individual. The chapter details the emergence of the female literary star, which only becomes normalized as a practice by the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, it rereads the modernism turn through Bourdieu’s fields approach to discuss how the disdaining artist also became a trope of autobiographical writing in the tradition of Hemingway and Faulkner and others. Glass successfully links these brands of literary celebrity to the adjudicating worlds of critics and awards and the way these generated a new branding of the global and globalized author in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Gaylyn Studlar’s “The changing face of celebrity and the emergence of motion picture stardom” provides a genealogical map of film stardom. Studlar develops the structure of the celebrated individual that informed the organization in the film industry. Her approach recognizes that the film industry was incredibly adept at producing stars, but identifies their character outline in various entertainment and cultural forms that predate the establishment of the film star system that dominated the studio system by the 1920s. Her analysis interestingly points to the visibility of certain social characteristics in nineteenth-century celebrated icons as the elements that were translated into celebrity via film in the twentieth century. In the early nineteenth century, personalities such as Beau Brummell as the original dandy translated a sense of male public self through style and manner that was beyond class and opened up a new form of public expression of taste and value. In a similar vein, the actress and dancer Sarah Bernhardt developed a public identity of transgression and open possibilities that drew the attention of theatrical crowds in both Europe and North America, but also helped establish an emerging platform for gendered public performance embodied by film stars as they revealed their private lives in connection with their film performances. William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody expressed a public masculinity of beauty as well as strategies of promotion in his Wild West Shows that by the 1920s provided the charted map for its organization in male film celebrity in figures like Rudolf Valentino and beyond.

As the chapters in Part One reveal, the genealogy of celebrity has produced an intriguing discourse about the public self and its connection to the way the private and the public are presented via individuals and represented and valorized by media

and cultural institutions as much as by the audiences they generate. Examining the historical dimensions that inform our current celebrity culture makes it clearer how celebrity as a discursive formation – to use a Foucauldian turn of phrase – is an incredibly active and enduring site for the debate and contestation of identity and individualization and the articulation of cultural power through these tropes of the self.

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The Moral Concept of Celebrity

A Very Short History Told as a Sequence of Brief Lives

Fred Inglis

I

The history of celebrity does not admit of theoretic treatment.¹ The “theory” of public role-play could only collapse into banal generalizations about the interplay of power (understood as public and private efficacy), social visibility as opposed to shadowiness as weapons of an individual’s significance, and unresolvable disputes footnoting Max Weber’s handy catchall, “charisma,” and his casual allocation of its components as veering between office and personality (1948: 246–64).

This essay will take for granted the supremacy of historical narrative – the tales we can retell, as vividly as possible, of *local* instantiation, celebrity as it was lived, then and now.

But such a narrative is to be framed by a still unwritten history: the history of the feelings, and the way they yield and create meaning. For the damned thing, celebrity, is everywhere acknowledged but, outside a few scholars, rarely understood. It is on everybody’s lips a few times every week; it is the staple of innumerable magazines on either side of the Atlantic, whether in the glossy and worshipful guise of *Hello!* and *Glamour* or the downright fairytale telling and mendacity of the *National Enquirer* and *Sunday Sport*; it fills a strip cartoon in (where else?) *Private Eye* and provides *all* the dailies, whether tabloid or broadsheet, with the contents of news, op-ed, gossip and, not infrequently, contributed columns.

It is also – though not often acknowledged as such – **a moral concept**. That is to say, to discuss celebrities is to bring into play heavily evaluative terms for the understanding and placing of our lives and the lives of others. This notion “of understanding and placing” is, as I say, a product of our passions, some ignoble (envy, malice, spite) some high, wide and handsome (admiration, generosity, sympathy, love). But in whatever case, the concept, like all concepts, serves, in Quentin Skinner’s words, “to pick out certain features describing what we have observed and to exclude others.” He goes

on: “to employ a concept is always to appraise and classify our experience from a particular perspective and in a particular way. What we experience and report will accordingly be what is brought to our attention by the range of concepts we possess and the nature of the discriminations they enable us to make” (2002: 44).

The trouble is that some concepts are so loosely used that they become vacuous; they fail, that is, to isolate key features from other less distinctive features and therefore permit only very careless discriminations. If I am right that the word “celebrity” is indeed used both to praise and to blame according to sometimes strong, sometimes transient emotions, then an essay such as this, seeking both to historicize and to refine the understanding of such a concept and its expressive force becomes, in ambition at least, an essay in moral theory.

This ambition turns out to be all the more substantial when we remind ourselves of the commonplace that celebrity is also one of the adhesives which, at a time when the realms of public politics, civil society and private domestic life are increasingly fractured and enclosed in separate enclaves, serve to pull those separate entities together and to do their bit toward maintaining social cohesion and common values. Nonetheless, in societies like ours priding themselves on having reduced the aura of deference, on having opened their elites to popular talent, on their mingling of high old art and new low popular culture with a fine egalitarian hand, it is something of a surprise to find quite so many people in thrall to the power of that same celebrity, and to those who, involuntarily or otherwise, carry it along with their lives. One way to catch hold of this change will be to notice how celebrity has largely replaced the archaic concept of renown. (But we must take care: the two concepts are not commensurate.)

Renown, we shall say, was once assigned to men of high accomplishment in a handful of prominent and clearly defined positions. A sixteenth-century jurist, cleric, senior mercenary or scholar was renowned for bringing honor to the office he occupied. He might be acclaimed in the street but the recognition was of his accomplishment – his learning (in the case of John Donne, for instance), his victories (as Othello is acclaimed in the play), his implacable power (in the case of Cardinal Wolsey). Renown brought honor to the office not the individual, and public recognition was not so much of the man himself as of the significance of his actions for the society.

This historical difference is readily studied by way of the fame of one of the very few women of historical renown in the period before celebrity became a feature of the individualization of fame. We have a detailed record of the royal progresses of Elizabeth I and these bring out their ceremonial meaning as *pledging* monarch to people, and vice versa. What is publicly affirmed by her attire and adornments, and by her words on the one hand and by the people’s witness of themselves and their self-display (masques, banners, cheering, children’s presenting of posies to the queen) is nothing less than the mutual duties of each to the other.

This picturesque prologue serves to mark off honor and renown from glamour and celebrity. The rise of urban democracy, the 200-year expansion of its media of communication, together with the radical individualization of the modern sensibility made fame a much more transitory reward, and changed public acclaim from an

expression of devotion into one of celebrity. This is the measure of the incommensurability.

What follows is a sequence of historical examples, of individual life stories which neither constitute a sample nor clinch an argument. "Examples instruct; they do not prove," as Clifford Geertz ringingly tells us (2000: 148). Geertz's work is much to the point, and as far more than epigrammatist (though he is certainly that). He it is who, taking his lead from the later Wittgenstein, enforces the argument that, there being no such thing as a private language, the deep ideas and personal purposes of human beings are there, visibly and audibly to be interpreted as they are envehicled in symbolic action. To study celebrities in wise or foolish action is to write, in the mode of the historian, anthropologist or, come to that, television political commentator, "an ethnography of the vehicles of meaning" (Geertz 1983: 118). Having established which, Geertz in an aphorism which might stand as epigram to this whole collection, writes: "to judge without understanding constitutes an offense against morality" (1983: 113).

Our first example instructs in the force of contrast. My claim is that celebrity as presently understood is a 250-year-old phenomenon which came to birth as London transformed itself, some time after 1750 or so, into the first recognizably modern city. That city was characterized by a new permeability of class movement, by new habits of self-display encouraged by a new access to leisure, with pastimes to match, especially in the new leisure gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh; the display was fed by a prompt new industry of fashion, all this impelled by the colossal engines of industrial revolution and the vast fortunes, made and lost, that went with it.

In the previous century, the English Revolution had broken the absolute power and divine right of kings; James II's incompetence as a ruler and a man of faith ensured the sundering of church and state, and did for the power of Catholicism. The Orange succession and Queen Anne's unhappy failure to provide a royal heir handed the crown to the Hanoverian house and the three Georges. The second George was the last monarch to lead an army into battle – in the dynastic and geographic convolutions of the War of the Austrian Succession in the 1740s – and the third George completed, in effect, the withdrawal of the monarch from effective political life, although he himself certainly wouldn't have accepted that description; he schemed variously to retain the American colonies, and went famously off his head – oddly enough at the very moment of his greatest popularity. For our purposes, however, George III's reign coincides with the historical moment at which the capital replaces the court as the significant center of society. It is also the moment at which, in Bagehot's well-known and cynical distinction, the state divides itself into its "executive" and its "dignified" segments.

Which brings us back to the Virgin Queen and her quite different orders and embodiments of rule and the fame rule requires to be effective. Fame must make a spectacle of itself and the display of Queen Elizabeth I was certainly spectacular, whether or not the adjective existed then, but the meaning the spectacle dramatized was not celebrity but renown. Elizabeth is renowned as being the monarch; her fame is conferred by her people on behalf of God and England; the enacted theory of her

rule partakes equally of her pious receptiveness and her subjects' supplication and approval.

She set out on January 14, 1559, the day before her coronation, seated in an open carriage, followed and preceded by a thousand horsemen, her whole attire stiff with glittering jewels and flashing gold leaf, the innate radiance of which was still believed to possess mysterious magic (Withington 1918: 199–202; Anglo 1969).² "As she moved, a vast didactic pageant unfolded, stage by stage, settling her into the moral landscape of the resilient capital ..." In Fenchurch Street, a child was appointed to present her with gifts of blessing tongues to praise and true hearts to serve her; at Cornhill, another child on a throne was supported by four citizens representing the cardinal virtues, and they in turn were provided with their moment of fame in a little cameo during which they trod underfoot four other citizens attired as the contrary vices. On to Cheapside, where she passed down a thoroughfare lined with great poster paintings of the English monarchs culminating in herself, paused (in Little Conduit) at two large stage mountains, one bare and barren (bad government), one green and flowering ("a flourishing commonweal"), met Father Time who gave her a copy of the Book of Truth, listened to a Latin oration in minatory praise of herself by a schoolboy of St Paul's, and to another schoolboy oration at Christ's Hospital, and wound up at Temple Bar to read tablets carried by the giants Gog and Magog summarizing all the honor and admonition offered to her.

It makes a sumptuous story and marks a very wide space between the political imagination of the Elizabethans and our own. Theirs was allegorical, specific and plain as day. The queen stood for clear moral absolutes, a whole medley of them: Chastity, Wisdom, Peace, Beauty, and Religion. But the point of the progress was for her royalty to be instructed by her people in its duty and significance toward them, hence the presence of so many children. She in her turn knew her place, and took the lessons to heart, promising on Cheapside "that for the safetie and quietness of you all, I will not spare, if nede be, to spend my blood."

Exotic, indeed, and it looks a long way from the Notting Hill carnival. Yet it is not so *very* far. Elizabeth's progress was a confection of charisma, where that slippery concept connotes the public location of authority and its benefits, of fame and its supernatural aura. Charisma, first made much of by Max Weber as mentioned, is at once the personal radiance and gravity of a publicly recognized figure and the symbolic halo of value and meaning lent to that figure by those rituals which declare and create centrality and importance.

In Elizabeth's case, the worshipful rituals at once claimed and ratified her. They connected her reciprocally to her people. So, too, with presidents and prime ministers, monarchs and dictators, and in a quite intelligibly scaled diminuendo, with the carefully shaded circles of significance which surround them: ministers and secretaries of state; solemn figures of lasting achievement, businessmen, clerics, admirals, marshals, artists, scientists; leading figures of more or less democratic communication without which we would all be lost in the world, television commentators, announcers, journalists, opinionators; and out beyond these circles which surround the very center, the obviously whirling and transitory porters of fame created by the cultural industries and the huge happiness and misery brought by the

industrialization of leisure: the stars of film, sport, rock, kitchen, soap and a dozen other pastimes.

Celebrity is, however, a much less secure structure than ceremony, and has always had to contain and express much more contradictory public passions than were abroad along the Elizabethan River Thames. The contrast is measured if we jump a mere two centuries from Elizabeth's to Hanoverian England.³ The monarchical George III, who inherited from the Hanoverian line decidedly old-fashioned ideas of kingly authority, found himself saddled (the metaphor is accurate) with a raucous and veering set of expectations on the part of his ruling class, his upstart bourgeoisie, and the surging crowds of his hungry, lawless and intermittently insurgent populace.

King George III's son, George, was born in 1762, two years after his father came to the throne aged only 22. George senior was the first of the Hanovers to have been born in England, a man of pious and righteous conservatism and a decided political will which brought him into serious conflict with his ministers over American independence and (he being a devout Lutheran) over the emancipation of the Catholics. But the poor fellow has been recovered from historical almost-oblivion by Alan Bennett's remarkable play and then movie of 1994, *The Madness of King George*, which deals out such delicate-handed justice to the king's domestic propriety and personal rectitude, while so painfully and comically dramatizing his outrage at the treatment given him by his doctors and warders during the gibbering madness brought on by porphyria of the kidneys.

It was not only outrageous to him that he was straitjacketed, mustard-plastered, tied down to his bed, had leeches stuck to his head, his urine and excreta studied by servants and doctors; he was utterly humiliated by all this being common knowledge to the nation, everywhere reported in the press, openly discussed in Parliament, the small change of political chatter in the coffeehouses. George had always entertained much grander ideas of his own capacities and the power with which he wanted to express them than either the inexplicit British Constitution or his tough, trustworthy ministers – North, Pitt the Younger, even Fox – would permit. George never had the money he wanted, particularly to spend on building palaces commensurate with his dignity and his artistic tastes; his subjects crowded onto his very doorstep at Buckingham House; if he wanted to attend the theater, why then he had to join his subjects in Drury Lane.

The king's adventitious combination of publicized insanity, subdued showiness and unselfconscious stolidity set a pattern for the monarch which proved amazingly durable. The madness made him vulnerable and sympathetic, and his peppery self-righteousness made him respectable. Such a figure, removed but familiar, acquired the aura of celebrity without having to work for it. The state required a dignified and dutiful sovereign; the people, in their turn, looked for a great personage who was at one and the same time neighbor, national possession (they couldn't make him kneel to them, as they did Garrick, but they could insist he showed himself to them), and type and token of the good life. Such a life should be compounded of a little art, a little money, a little munificence, British beef and a proper patriotism.

The king filled each dimension of the role and the people applauded. For his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, the consequence was heavily overdetermined. He was after

all eldest of eight surviving children (his big brother Frederick died young) and six stillborn. Given the leisure culture of ruling class boys at the time, the sexual and aesthetic lessons of the Grand Tour, the necessary militarism of an age in which the country went so frequently to war with Spain and France, let alone the threat of civil war in 1745, all this mixed with wealthy idleness in the clubs of London and the grand houses on the estates, George Prince Regent was a predictable and not-so-very-awful product of such an education.

Sure, he loved the part of dandy, certainly he got very fat. Without any formal apprenticeship for the post, when he became Prince Regent for the first, fairly brief spell, the ministers naturally kept him well away from anything executive, about which, being petulantly accustomed to his own way on trivial matters among his sycophants, he was duly petulant. That remains the unedifying way of heirs presumptive when the parent-monarch reigns for more than 50 years. Although when the prince became king he was widely derided, long since mocked in the Gillray cartoons and earnestly condemned for his treatment of his wretched and abandoned wife, Caroline of Brunswick, he (and his brothers) had done their intermittent best to establish the established throne as a fixed feature of British politics quite unlike the contemptible French with their murderously dangerous Committee of Public Safety and their corporal-emperor. Prince George was after all Grand Master of the Masons at a time when freemasonry was a site of lower middle-class and mercantile-egalitarian comradeship, for 23 years Freeman of a dozen cities, acknowledgeable in the street (Colley 1996: 241).

The prince was satisfyingly vain, promiscuous, slothful, dissolute, drunken and greedy. He was also cultivated, a generous patron, an appreciative connoisseur of art and townscape, and when he became king, persuasive paymaster and codesigner of a projected new London, marble clad, high, wide, boulevarded and handsome.

As prince, his contribution to the formation of celebrity was central and, for a major dimension of the concept, highly specific. Prince George invented Brighton, near enough to the capital not to be out of touch, far enough away to do whatever you liked in. (The fact that Brighton retains this ambiguity long after the train first cut the journey to 90 minutes is a testimony to the weightiness of cultural history.)

Brighton was invented as medical advice lit upon the healthful properties of salt water and sea air, just at the moment when walking out for a little exercise coincided with promenading for social display, and when the pleasures of holidaying in clean air away from the city created not only pleasure gardens but pleasure-and-leisure towns and spas – Bath, Cheltenham, Leamington – all stiffened with a dose of medicament.

Brighton would speedily provide all this, and provide it all first, and the prince launched it by buying a farmhouse there which faced the River Steine in order to be near his mistress Mrs Fitzherbert, whom he had illegally married in 1784. So from the start Brighton (and all seaside resorts) was linked to lubricity, and royal heirs to sexual scandal. Prince George, however, did his scandal in theatrical style, and the Marine Pavilion, as it first was called, was its stage. He and Henry Holland, the classiest architect in town, built a reflection of the farmhouse beside the original, added pagoda roofs and connected them with a double-apsed rotunda, fronted by a

stately colonnade (Nairn and Pevsner 1965: 438ff.). As you would expect, however, when the prince became King George IV in 1820, he never returned to Brighton. Like Prince Hal before him, the crown compelled sobriety, and he turned his attentions to Windsor, and to transforming his mere house into Buckingham Palace, in London.

The years in Brighton had, however, consolidated two halves of exemplary celebrity – the domestic and the dissipated – and they serve to fasten with the authority of the crown the earliest components of the whole colossal business, as well as to remind us just how plentiful are the precedents of commotion in royal households, and the curious passions these quicken and fulfil in the national citizenry. The people deferred and the crown condescended; the people mocked and the crown placated; thus and thus were ruling and popular passions equalized. In any discussion of celebrity the difficulty is always to find this point of balance and of rational judgment which might prove morally sound. After all, it was Shelley who, stirred to both rage and hope by the dreadful putting down of a harmless demonstration at St Peter's Fields outside Manchester in 1819, addressed his nation as follows:

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king, –
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn, – mud from a muddy spring, –
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling ... (1914: 570)

Shelley's splendid scorn is perfectly just, his hope still prompted by the French example. Gillray's pitiless depiction of "the Prince of Whales" (*sic*) ran a thumbnail down one nerve in the nation, no doubt; but the Freemasons were just as strong. The royal family, that is to say, had portioned out to it, on the one hand, fierce antimonarchical sentiment as voiced by orator Henry Hunt of the Radicals, by the Cato Street conspirators, and by Shelley; on the other, there was the not-unkindly and respectful indifference of both populace and bourgeoisie. The latter, no doubt, folded itself into an ecstasy of deep curtsies and bows when in the physical presence of royalty, and the former fell to more or less friendly cheering when the coach went by. But as reform picked up momentum through the 1820s, the jolly Jack Tar William IV put his foot in it by trying to block change and enlisting the obdurate old reactionary, the Duke of Wellington, in his cause, and both the Parliamentarians led by Peel, and the people, ensured that the monarch would thereafter be kept well away from serious political power, however much the occupant of the crown resented it.

II

My genteel narrative is more or less chronological, my purpose briefly to identify how the frames of feeling constructed for the definition and dramatization of celebrity were made to fit, on the one hand, the kings and queens and their dependably erratic offspring and, on the other, licensed licentiates of the ruling class.

That same class was, however, by the time the stout prince came to the throne, far from being the only one recruiting membership for promotion to public office

as a celebrity. The radical historical consequences of the relocation of power from court to city gave quite new opportunities for the public recognition of the famous. Propinquity was suddenly possible; the radioactive glow of fame could be felt hotly on the London street: "Look, it's the king in his carriage," and then, "But that *was* Dr Johnson."

Nowadays, "Celebrities!" we snort, and then rush down the street to catch a glimpse of one. Mostly, however, we are of the view that whatever celebrities are, they haven't been around for long. They may be in a movie, on the catwalk, shake hands with the President, turn up on the sofa opposite Oprah, be paid a fabulous fortune, but then they vanish, forgotten and grown old.

In point of fact, some of them are still going strong after two centuries, and if we go back to 1812 we shall find the example of a celebrity living out a life of amazing colorfulness, of insolent self-regard, of shock and scandal and of high achievement also, all of which will seem wholly familiar in the present.

So in 1812, aged 24, George Gordon, 6th Baron Byron, made a quite impressive maiden speech in Britain's House of Lords, had had his new poetry book, *Childe Harold* (a *childe* meant a sort-of-knight errant), sell out, and had made friends with the stout debauchee and patron of the arts, the Prince of Wales, heir to the throne. He also had Lady Caroline Lamb, wife of Lord Melbourne, three years his senior, sexy, reckless, at his feet in adoration of his amazing good looks, his powerful club-footed body, and his sheer Romanticism.

Byron lived out in glaring and deliberate publicity the glamorous drama of the Romantic poet (1928; Barnett 1947; Raphael 1989).⁴ A big part of the drama was taken up, as it still is, by the always fascinating action of sex. He took up with the matronly and magnificent Lady Oxford, kept poor Caroline Lamb dangling, and in an extreme gesture of social violation, made his half-sister, Augusta, pregnant; he made at least eight other women pregnant, too, in London, Venice, Ravenna, and Cephalonia, and there were innumerable seductions without issue, including the three pretty daughters of his landlady in Athens.

The life became synonymous with the work. Byron kept no space open between passion and poetry. He wrote very fast and spontaneously, just as he lived. But he did so with a shrewd sense of the adoring, jealous gallery to which he played to mutual gratification. He caught up all the dizzy new clichés of Romantic melodramas and gave them blazing sultry life. Thus, in the poems, there are the dark dungeons and mysterious hero of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, the Arab horsemen in the desert in *The Giaour*, the pirates in *The Corsair*. Above all, he barely fictionalized his own sexual biography (as his readers well knew) in *Don Juan*.

He turned himself into that legendary prince of all demon lovers. His special genius was to make Don Juan (just as Mozart had done in *Don Giovanni*) a comic but deeply serious hero, fleet, adventurous, funny, dynamite to respectability, and a tireless defender of great liberty, whether of oppressed women or of nations. All these brilliant contradictions were played out under the nose of high and low society, until the whispering turned into a roar. The tales of sexual triumphs (Byron and Don Juan together really *meant* their brief declarations of devotion) alongside the proofs of passion, courage, graceless brutality and

hard-hearted irresponsibility flashed round London by way of the well-named journal, *The Tatler*.

In all this public spectacle Byron embodies the deep damnation of the celebrity, and does it first and most completely. He lived with high visibility exactly on the split between (good) sense and (passionate) sensibility. After all, he had started life an untitled Aberdonian, and only became a Lord when his cousin died in battle. So he was half a rationalist eighteenth-century Scot and half a reckless libertarian aristocrat. In the making of the idea of celebrity he confirmed the necessity of charm and its magnified echo, glamour. He tied the knot between sex, fame and the artist. Not that his conquests were at all unwilling. Desire and fame swept them into his arms. He remains a byword for his kind of good looks; his merry, teasing, tender, offhand personality shines out from the poems as unmistakably as it must have done on the way to bed.

Byron knew what he was doing, all right, and loved it. He dramatized the latest version of fame and of success in life: good looks, great gifts, and impulsive, dashing action, all set off by the gleam and reek of *scandal*. Both author and his audience adored the tales of misdemeanor and discovered the life in the poetry, as was the point. Having done so, the same audience then mixed gleeful incredulity, envy, spite, admiration and sexual daydreams into the steaming brew of celebrity still simmering in all our imaginations.

Time of course caught up with Byron. In spite of his past, he matured, even settled – not settled *down*, of course, but settled for a new, political seriousness. He was in his mid-thirties, going bald, ill more often as he paid the price for pretending eternal youth, put on fat and dieted it ferociously away. Repelled by English illiberalism, he took up the cause of Greek liberty, then under the brutal yoke of Turkish oppression.

His wonderful poem *Don Juan* catches up and gives form to all these clashing components of his life and roots them in the complex makings of fame. Add to this his setting sail with a small troop of marines to do what he could to liberate the Greeks, followed by his sudden death by fever at 36 on board ship (drained of his blood by primitive doctors), and you have the defining image of gallant celebrity, handsome hero, sexual conqueror and high achievement, all framed as a work of art. Rake, drinker, hard rider, wit, milord, freeborn Englishman, mighty poet, first great celebrity: a life larger than life, an act for future male celebrities – Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, John Kennedy – to emulate.

III

Hence, if one looks back a hundred or even two hundred years, it is reassuring to find much of the same hoo-ha being played out around the public figures of the day, to recognize many of the same obsessions with fame and the lives lived by the famous – with their money (how much of it?), with their family (what are they like at home?), with their sex lives of course (who with?), with their work, their talent, their true merits, their character. So one first point of this essay will be to reassure ourselves that there is nothing uniquely decadent about our being

intermittently so mesmerized by the famous; it's just been going on for a very long time.

Riding the curves of history backward and landing in a Parisian theater in 1872, we will find Sarah Bernhardt playing the lead in Victor Hugo's colossal romantic melodrama *Ruy Blas*, and playing it with such unforgettable force and poignancy that among those hundreds who fell in love with her from afar was the playwright himself, 40 years her senior and able to press his devotion from a lot nearer (Brandon 1991).

Bernhardt was beautiful, sure, in her pixie-faced *gamin* way and with her beautiful springy golden curls, and in her life as in her acting was reckless and passionate and impulsive – all the things a Romantic heroine taught as attributes of the distinctive and creative individual woman. She had a thrillingly pure, clear, expressive voice. She acted *all the time* and was always sincere in doing so. She was anorexically thin, decidedly in love with death (sleeping from time to time in her made-to-measure coffin), and crazy in trivial ways, traveling on tour with a pet lynx, an alligator and a python for company.

From the age of 36 onward, by which time her name was international, her arrivals in a city stopped the traffic, she welcomed to her bed with delightful candor long lines of helpless admirers, and she had become the unchallenged manager of all her own productions, including the set, the lighting, the cast and the schedule. It was Henry James, of course, who completely took her moral measure:

She has a perennial freshness ... understands the art of motion and attitude as no one else does, and her extraordinary grace never fails her ... She is too American not to succeed in America. The people who have brought to the highest development the arts of publicity will recognize a kindred spirit in a figure so admirably adapted for conspicuity. (James 1993: 732)

They did indeed. For Bernhardt, always at her finest onstage when acting death, gave her dazzled admirers a dramatization of how to *be*. That is to say, in projecting herself as acting out what one truly was, she taught that success in life is truthfulness to a free self, is a declaration of sincerity, is a display of unforced passion, is a matter of keeping faith with strong, deep, honest feeling.

These are the resounding moral lessons of the Romantic movement, the movement of Beethoven, Byron, Giuseppe Verdi and Gustave Courbet. Bernhardt outdid them all for sheer fame, for the excessively public nature of her dramatization of the Romantic virtues. When, moreover, she added to these her role as national heroine, turning the Odéon theater into a hospital for the wounded of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, nursing the soldiers herself, she added a crucial ingredient to the narrative of the good life as lived by the celebrity. An ardent cause, pursued with compassion, instantly became a defining quality for her women successors at the top of stage and screen stardom.

She was, moreover, like Sarah Siddons before her, a slave of duty. Her audiences not only worshipped, they demanded her. So when, after decades of agonizing suffering from a damaged knee, she had her leg amputated below the thigh, off she went immediately (at 70) on a 99-city lecture tour of the United States.

As Bernhardt's amazing career brings out, the celebrity narrative goes a long way back. By her life and her art she radically inflected its form and handed it on for later great actresses to inhabit and alter in their turn. She provides, as history always does, a test of authenticity in her heirs. She was an undoubted genius at the job; she thereby returns us to the necessary, antique distinction between fame and renown. To be famous is to be well known, easily recognized on screen or in the street; to be renowned is to be honored for solid, ungainsayable achievement, and achievement, what is more, of a morally admirable kind.

Famousness, let us say, is to be publicly recognizable although perhaps known for no great accomplishment; "famous for being famous" is the cliché but it's not much help. Fame starts from something or other, but what it is may not add up to much. Renown is far more resonant and ample. It has a slightly old-fashioned ring to it but is none the worse for that. Renown is well merited, and this the more so since we have had since 1800 or so such unrivalled amounts of information about famous people. Go back to the sixteenth century and the number of the famous was tiny. Her citizens knew who Elizabeth I was, but very few knew of the hardworking drudge and playwright, Will Shakespeare. Renown now takes in acclaim, sheer volume of talent and accomplishment, and probably of personality. The renowned celebrity is not just rich but munificent (George Soros); not just a very clever scientist but a genius (Richard Feynman); not just a sumptuous beauty but a consummate actress of Bernhardtian sincerity (Marilyn Monroe); not just a successful painter but an artist of intransigent daring and incorruptible independence (Henri Matisse).

It will surely be useful, for the purposes of this essay, to contrast with Bernhardt's example (she died, still at the summit of renown, in 1923 aged 79) another celebrity of a certain fame in her day but of no achievement whatever. The usefulness of the tale of Lola Montez – borrowed here from Morton's biography (2007) – is to make plain just how long a history of the more nauseating aspects of renownless celebrity there turns out to be – it could easily be made to go back to the middle of the eighteenth century.

That date, it is worth adding, is important. The invention of celebrity as we understand it now begins, as I said, from the moment when the center of social life moved from the court to the new kind of city which London had become in 1760 or so. By then the colossal momentum of the new industrial revolution allied to a steep rise in land prices, all together with the new constitution intended to keep the monarch in his place, had created a rush of new wealth and new social classes, as well as new forms of leisure to fill the time that money and machinery had made. Recording this unprecedented, thronged and busy street life was a vast range of transient leisure reading with the obsessive gossiping to match that Sheridan caught so vividly in *School for Scandal*. These are the cultural bits and pieces from which we inherit the weird mixture of good lives and monster caricatures which is the world of fame today and was the world of both Bernhardt the genius and the gaudy nonentities who emulated her exotic manner.

One such was Lola Montez: a talentless, tarty fake who was born Elizabeth Gilbert in Ireland in the 1820s and gradually transformed herself into Donna Maria Dolores de Ponis y Montez. Adorned with this title and without any insight into what she was

doing, she intuited how to make herself into a celebrity while lacking gifts, opportunity, birth or money. She is therefore an object lesson from the fame factory which so regularly takes up some chance winners of a no-talent show and hurls them into the brief galaxy of stardom, abandoning them at once to their self-destruction.

Lola Montez won her short career mostly by the simple exhibition of sex, sexiness, sexuality. "The splendour of her breasts," one admirer wrote, "made madmen everywhere" and she gave the madmen plenty of bodily curves to gaze at. She was an awful sort of stripper-dancer (especially in her dire *tarantella*), so her all-male audiences alternated between goggle-eyed lustfulness and derisive hooting. When the derision became too much for Lola, she came to the front of the stage and berated the boys in a piercing shriek. Then they stopped jeering and cheered her to the echo.

She made and lost a fortune, won the heart of King Ludwig of Bavaria and a good deal of his ample fortune, toured America and Australia to full, always tumultuous and raucous houses, high as a kite on immodesty, religious mania, drink and opium until, as you'd expect, aged barely 40, she died of an excess of fame and all that fame brings with it.

Lola Montez shows us that there have long been ghastly and impossible celebrities, and that superior people have been saying to one another for two centuries, "My dear! how can *anyone* bear to look at her?" But she was made to measure by the industry of celebrity, first assembled in London in the 1760s, transferred to Paris by the Second Empire, making its headquarters thereafter in New York and Chicago, and its ultimate research station in Hollywood.

Bernhardt was in the driving seat of this headlong machine, knowing exactly how to steer it; Lola Montez hitched a lift at the back. Together, they pose the still unsolved questions: What shall we make of our celebrities? What do they make us feel, for good and ill? How on earth will they make out for themselves?

IV

But of course they do, and the readiest way to begin to understand this truth is to dissolve the concept into rather more distinctive parts. "Celebrity" in itself is too loose and baggy in use to provide for serious thought. It covers, far too blankly, very various ways of identifying either fame itself or those bright facets of fame, achievement and renown. It is used to name hardly more than public recognizability when what is at stake are crucial matters of quality and value, of what these different lives are worth to those living and those watching them.

Consider instead the ordinary language according to which we think of other people. We may think of them as "characters," as "figures" maybe (as – with celebrity in mind – "public figures"), rather differently as "persons," as being in possession of a "self" ("What do you feel in yourself?"). More spookily, we may think of someone as having "presence," even of being "a presence," and last and most significant in this brief round-up of human specification borrowed from Amélie Rorty (1976), "an individual" (and there could be plenty more, "a case," "a soul," "a shadow"). Each concept refigures a certain moral evaluation of the man or woman so described

– a distinctive individual for instance is what we each hope we may be ourselves, someone to be noticed for his or her own sake, whether forceful or demure, serene or restless. A presence however – something one has rather than is – betokens some hard to define and metaphysical authority, but you know it immediately when you see it. To use these concepts is to look much closer at the objects and subjects of our applause and viciousness. It is, I think, better to understand not so much these brief lives in front of us, as to use them to discover our own deep allegiances and our estimations of what is humanly worthwhile. So, to weigh up a *character* is to test for moral solidity and foundation.

“Character” is a reassuring and familiar term of reference. To have a character is to have some fixity and durability. It is also to have integrity, which is to say those same qualities fitted and held together (and some, it may be, not necessarily likable). Paul Newman, supreme celebrity, had a character.⁵ Amazing good looks, for sure, but lots of celebrities have those. Think instead of his laughter in, say, *Butch Cassidy* or *The Sting*. It was large, open, invasive, infectious, an invitation to join him as an equal in finding the world incorrigibly comic. Recall his moral ambiguity in so many of his movies and see that as intrinsic to his screen character. Then remember also his 50 years of marriage to Joanne Woodward (clearly his equal), his giving away half a billion dollars of his pickle fortune to sick kids, his being delegate to Democratic Conventions, his gift of half a million dollars to the dissident journal *The Nation* (Navasky 2005: 354–8), his accomplishment as a serious racing driver ... this is a formidable character, American all through, a character who has discovered and fashioned his own strong characteristics, and then lived them fully.

No doubt a public figure, even a *figurehead*, must have a character, but as a celebrity enacts less his or her special characteristics than carries off or embodies certain key or timely public values. The ready example is Nelson Mandela (Mandela 1995). He was globally known to have borne up under 25 years’ imprisonment on Robben Island with amazing courage, resilience, even meekness. He left prison in serenity, smiling all the way. He forgave his enemies and thereby made reconciliation and justice imaginable. He stood for the best, the only values which would hold his society away from civil war. An inadequate economist and an ineffective policy-maker, he became, as figureheads must, a national allegory: calm, gregarious, jolly, accessible, rock-steady.

The moral point about figureheads is made when we grasp that they may also personify fearful, even horrible public values, if the times are ripe for them. Hitler at his peak was such a figurehead, an allegory of stern, removed and ruthless authority, uniformed, expressionless, commanding (softening only and indicatively when bending down to ruffle children’s heads). The people gazed and raptly endorsed this special embodiment of what they believed to be their best national identity. Indisputably forceful in his prime, compelling in his achievements, the monster dictator serves to remind us how vague a concept celebrity is, and how important it is to the upholding of civic culture that we keep alive a more vigorous and discriminating moral vocabulary than is spoken on chat radio.

It’s a long drop from figureheads to persons but a relief; personhood is our domestic home. We all equally count ourselves and others as *persons*, and are never more

outraged than when somebody else takes us for granted or otherwise fails to “treat us as a person.” “Person” comes on with a diminuendo; it marks out an everyday inhabitable space for any man or woman, and therefore a celebrated person is somebody with whom we might like to be friends. The right person naturally attracts the adjective “nice,” and a celebrity whom we think of as a nice person is thereby ratified as caring for the domestic virtues: caringness itself, easiness of manner, openness, modesty, kindliness (if not without steel or substance).

There are dozens of such celebrities, a preponderance of women, a fact which merits some thought. But things are not so bad if celebrity personhood is assigned to women like (say) Dolly Parton, Barbara Walters, Jane Fonda (yes, indeed), Michelle Obama. I would add to such a list (you, no doubt, have your own candidates) Kylie Minogue, invented by the pop industry at 16 as a bright, merry, sufficiently pretty confection to be packaged and sold. She then turned out to be not only intensely likable and a perfectly respectable singer, but very much her own person with steel in her character. Succumbing to breast cancer, she took her treatment reclusively, reported on herself with dispassion, was glimpsed hairless and wearing a snood, returned restored, indomitable, without self-pity, Australian. She did much for the good name of celebrity and made her kind of person not only nice but good also, thereby replenishing the stuff of the polity. In Britain, perhaps worldwide, Princess Diana, a lesser person than Kylie Minogue but not without spine, was agreed to be a nice, a charming person, beautiful manners, beautiful face, driven off the wall in private by the stiff and deathly constraints of royal family convention (including the ancient convention of husbandly adultery). Public indulgence readily forgave her, or simply didn’t see her fecklessness and self-indulgence or her essential smallness of soul exactly because she was “such a lovely person.”

If a person may be nice, a *self* cannot be so. A celebrity with a self is tough reckoning. Unlike a character, a self has no self-defining story to live out (a self is not a hero), not possessing or expressing virtues. President Obama unmistakably has a self, but it is mysterious, intractable, inviolable. Selves are self-contained; a number of actors contrive a career out of such self-containment: Morgan Freeman, Katherine Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart.

It is no accident that these names are of a generation largely gone even though their movies have far from disappeared. Acting out their very selves, they found a dignity, a finality, a finish, which gave them their distinction. I would contend that nowadays a queer slackening in the fibers of the culture, a corrosion in the traditions of Hollywood itself, renders the most prominent actors of the day much less able to discover and live by a sufficient sense of their own selves. Tom Cruise, Heath Ledger, Angelina Jolie, or even Mitt Romney or Sarah Palin (remember them?), are not *there*, fully present as a self, as were earlier stars and politicians.

I am very far, however, from singing a song about the deturpation of culture, the going to the dogs of absolutely everything. The best celebrity self I can think of died only a couple of years ago. He is Walter Cronkite.⁶ Cronkite was the first celebrity news presenter after Ed Murrow, and like Murrow he incarnated some of the best of American values nightly on TV. He was surely in himself just as he seemed on screen – perfectly self-possessed except on those very rare occasions – the day of John

Kennedy's assassination above all – when his true self insisted on the tears of things, and quite right too. The self he had to show us was exactly what we needed him to be: that is dead straight, telling the news of the world as it was but in such a way as to make it intelligible, frightening at times, inspiring at others, but calling out from his audiences the same responses and attributes as were present in his reporting. As he quit, he poured scorn on the fatuously high remuneration by then being handed out to far more lightheaded men and women taking over his role. Cronkite's great fame was everywhere recognized as inseparable from his moral decency, his truthfulness, his strong patriotism (never stronger than on the famous occasion when he asked his people to admit that the Vietnamese War should be brought to an end), his plainness of speech and honesty of feeling. "Let us now praise famous men," the old poet said, but the point of praising Cronkite is that he gave public visibility to something that is best in American selfhood, and in doing so made such admirable selves more robust and likely.

"... and women." It would be a different moral argument to make such claims for Oprah Winfrey, but the strong self she undoubtedly is in her TV armchair, facing her interlocutors on the sofa opposite, keeps in lively activity certain key values which she endorses and projects with both truthfulness and authority. She teaches, so to say, the ethics of emotivism, which is just the familiar doctrine that one's best feelings are the guide to right conduct, but that best feelings are always threatened by the menace of, in D. H. Lawrence's excellent words, "working off on yourself feelings you haven't really got" (1985: 215). Turning private lives into public spectacles, she does so with such touch, tact and occasional sternness that intimacy is melted into communality, and the common good of loving kindness is reaffirmed.

Oprah Winfrey's is a self anyone might hope to share. Those I summon up as "presence" are, as I have suggested, inimitable and absolute. Presences represent a kind of secular saint. They manifest themselves in extreme circumstances – famine, war, plague – and are not to be turned away from doing right. The extremities of Russian history seem to call them out. Andrei Sakharov was a brave soldier in the Russian army fighting German Fascism, then became the nation's most distinguished physicist working on the Russian hydrogen bomb (Sakharov 1990). As his researches drew him away from weaponry to the great unsolved mysteries of cosmology (to which his genius contributed new theories of the asymmetry of the universe) he came utterly to repudiate the development of those hideous instruments of war, then absolutely to oppose them and to do so in the sacred name of human rights.

He was victimized by the usual apparatus of old Russian repression – vilification by government, harassment by the KGB, coarse abuse in *Pravda*, house arrest, fired from his job, exiled to the grim city of Gorky; but he remained implacable. Gentle and courteous in manner, fearless, unswervingly true not to his self nor to his character – these remain a mystery – but to the verities which exacted his conduct. Great human crises require such presences and human continuity itself needs that they be celebrated.

In the Anglophone world telling presences are likely to be either poets, scientists or maybe one or two philosophers. The terms of being set by these vocations, by their purity and discipline, make presences possible; politics or the churches are too

messy, too worldly, too much subject to inevitable mendacity and betrayal to allow for sainthood (this is not a condemnation: politicians *have* to lie, to dodge, to twist and turn, to get anything done at all). Perhaps Robert Lowell, tormented but good-humored as he was, was a saint, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (not without *his* torments), the physicist Paul Dirac.⁷

My last moral category is probably the most familiar and is a regular item in our schemes of everyday approval or condemnation. Each of us wants to lay claim to being *individual* (but not of course an *individualist*) where that means somebody of distinctive characteristics, a singular self, a personhood with its own will (but not willfulness), a satisfactory amalgamation of all the terms we have for enclosing and designating the impossible variety of humankind. Celebrity-individuals pull away from forms of employment, types of ethnicity or identity, social classes, even nations. In the United States, individuality is a moral goal, best thought of, in my view, as the work of art each somebody fashions out of their own lives.

By this token, success in life is to achieve reputation as a consequence of excellent individuality. The greatest individuals constitute a very long roll call. For sure, some of them may not even be likable, nor glamorous, nor particularly good, nor, indeed, enviable or admirable. This brings out the silliness of the concept of “role model”; no one “models” themselves on a “role,” but each and every one of us tries as best one can to find in ourselves, our character and its individuality those qualities and virtues we admire in others, and then – the biggest life’s work – to turn it into something which fits what we truly are and can become. What each individual is, is singular in ways which mark out a special variety of being, a resilience and integrity of character, toughness and delicacy of self, rigor and uprightness of personhood, sureness of identity and, toward the end of a life, some sufficient sense that the life has aesthetic shape, imaginative power, at best, discernible beauty.

Drawing up some such list of *celebrated*, well-made and Anglophone individualities, I would include – going back no more than 50 years and in addition to those mentioned (just to set the argument going) – the physicist Robert Oppenheimer and his great pupil Freeman Dyson, the architect Renzo Piano, the philanthropist George Soros, the cricketer Tendulkar, the poets Elizabeth Bishop and Seamus Heaney, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, the journalist Victor Navasky, the politicians Lyndon Johnson and Al Gore, the reporter John Cole, the actors Meryl Streep and Judi Dench, the movie-maker Ken Loach, the singer Bob Dylan, the jazz musician Louis Armstrong ... OK, you try. It’s an important game.

V

Mine has been a series of contentions rather than an argument. I am at pains to insist that celebrity is historical, that its form and substance have accumulated over two centuries, and that the present is no worse in its attentiveness to fame than the past. I have been eager to insist that the concept of celebrity is presently used in too scattered a way in order to describe very unlike instances, and have sought to provide a more detailed vocabulary of analysis. I have largely left out of my account the

human horribleness which also swirls around the more wretched of our celebrities, the effluent spite and malice which is emptied over their heads in the fanzines or on Murdoch's TV channels. There is much to say but somewhere else about the disgraceful menace which Fox News and the demons of yellow press and chat radio represent to the best parts of civilization, and something to be said as well, here left largely unspoken, about the suicidal and tedious triviality of those awarded their 15 minutes of fame who then find themselves ditched in a squalid almost-anonymity.

Those drenched by sewage have often asked for the trouble they are in. For the unsurprising conclusion of this brief essay on ethics and emotivism is that celebrities with sufficient character or self-possession or presence will have or find the moral resources to make something worthwhile of their status on behalf of the common good. Those who haven't will go under the vile tides of spite and envy, often consoled a little by the waves of money thrown so regardlessly at meritless fame by the unthinking and wasteful generosity of the Anglophone media and the twittering carrion birds around them. For whatever else this essay is, it is not a curse spoken over the present. Rather, it is an encouragement to those who read it to catch up a still energetic and living moral language and to speak it a bit more boldly in the conversation of culture.

Notes

- 1 This essay is, necessarily, contrived from my book *A Short History of Celebrity* (2010) which was written, at top speed, while I was Visiting Fellow in the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University in Canberra. At that time, I fear, I knew little about the scholarly work on the topic and was principally concerned to revise, in a minor way, the unhistorical and undifferentiated use of the concept of celebrity in ordinary public discourse. Mine was an attempt, on a tiny scale, to make it slightly more possible to judge the recipients of fame with greater finesse and a more capacious vocabulary of moral discrimination than is mostly to be found in the everyday evaluation of public figures.
- 2 Details here and following from Withington (1918). See also Anglo (1969).
- 3 Historical sources for the House of Hanover are innumerable. Details here taken from Porter (1990), Thompson (1990), and Brewer (1997).
- 4 The Byron literature is vast. This brief life story depends on the *Selected Letters* (1928), Barnett (1947), and Raphael (1989).
- 5 Levy's *Paul Newman: A Life* (2009) rather fails to do him justice.
- 6 See Walter Cronkite's excellent autobiography, *A Reporter's Life* (1997). I treat him at admiring length in my book *People's Witness: The Journalist in Modern Politics* (2002).
- 7 Certainly this is how Graham Farmelo pictures him in his splendid biography, *The Strangest Man: The Hidden Life of Paul Dirac, Quantum Genius* (2009).

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Brand Names

A Brief History of Literary Celebrity

Loren Glass

One morning in March 1812, George Gordon, Lord Byron famously woke up to find himself famous. The first edition of 500 copies of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* had sold out in just three days and his publisher, the Scotsman John Murray, was hurrying to reissue it in a less expensive format. The ensuing years would witness a frenzy of attention and adulation for the handsome young member of the House of Lords. He was lionized in London's high society, celebrated across Europe, and inundated by admiring letters from women eager to meet him. "Byromania," as it came to be called, was one of the first examples of fan-driven literary celebrity, and the adjective "Byronic" quickly became shorthand for the personal and literary style of its namesake. It was an inaugural moment in the history of literary celebrity. As his biographer Fiona MacCarthy confirms, the publication of *Child Harold* made Byron into "the first European cultural celebrity of the modern age" (2002: x). And as recent monographs by Ghislaine McDayter (2009) and Tom Mole (2007) reveal, Byron's celebrated career has in turn become a touchstone in the growing field of scholarship on literary celebrity. If the nascent culture industry enabled Byron's initial celebrity, that celebrity is now being both renewed and reevaluated by an academic industry devoted to its study.

Writers had striven for and meditated upon fame for centuries prior to Byron's apotheosis, but it was only during the Romantic era that literary celebrity began to take its modern form. Prior to the rise of print capitalism and mass literacy, writers typically addressed small audiences with whom they were personally acquainted, and it was not expected that they earn any money directly from their published texts. Literary figures were either patronized by the aristocracy or were themselves members of that aristocracy and their ideas of fame were based in established traditions of Judeo-Christian piety and classical honor that tended to emphasize posthumous renown. During the Romantic era, these traditions were challenged by more mundane and market-driven protocols of contemporaneous recognition and

reputation. Literary celebrity emerged during this era as the promotional deployment of an author's name and personality toward the end of achieving audience loyalty within a competitive and disorderly literary marketplace. Cut loose from the simultaneously supportive and restrictive ties of patronage, authors found themselves struggling for recognition and remuneration from a rapidly expanding audience of strangers. As Leo Braudy affirms in his foundational history of fame, "the vital change from the classical to the modern view of artistic fame is ... the loss of the patron as the touchstone of artistic identity and his replacement by the critic, and the loss of the muse as the source of inspiration and her replacement by the artist's own sensibility" (1997: 362).¹

The Romantics were the first artists to champion their own sensibilities in response to the destabilizing forces of the literary marketplace, and the masculine heroic figure they forged would have avatars across Europe and, increasingly, the world as the formulation of the romantic hero coincided with, and to a certain degree depended on, colonial expansion and its attendant fantasies of adventure and escape. The romantic hero additionally inaugurated what I'm calling the autobiographical mandate, the requirement that the protagonist align with the writer such that the literary celebrity becomes an amalgam of character, narrator, and author. Lord Byron was Childe Harolde as Goethe was Werther as Chateaubriand was René; these authors channeled their post-aristocratic angst into an image of masculine melancholy that would have enormous appeal to a rapidly expanding (and predominantly female) middle-class readership.

If the Romantic era witnessed the emergence of the author as a literary "personality" addressed to, and partly generated by, an anonymous audience, the rise of realism in the middle of the nineteenth century coincides with the expansion of this audience along with an increasing attention to the authorial personality by journalists and critics as the literary marketplace in the great urban centers expands and stabilizes into a series of overlapping authorial star systems. The nineteenth century also witnesses a more diverse deployment of literary celebrity, as women, African-Americans and other minority writers gradually manage to appeal to readers through name recognition and audience loyalty. As authors accommodate themselves to the exigencies and uncertainties of the marketplace, literary celebrity develops both as a way of addressing an increasingly dispersed and diverse audience on seemingly intimate terms, and as one of the more reliable methods for advertising books, a process that was proving to be rife with controversy and uncertainty. As Doubleday partner Walter Hines Page proclaimed in his appraisal of the field's growth over the course of the nineteenth century, "about the advertising of books nobody knows anything" (1904: 115). Since, unlike other mass produced commodities, every book is different, the publishing industry struggled to achieve the kind of brand loyalty then developing in other industries. One consequence was that authorial names became brand names, helping their publishers to promote and predict sales in the face of unpredictable market forces.²

Literary modernism emerges in explicit resistance to these market forces, generating what Pierre Bourdieu calls "the economic world turned upside down" (1995:

81). As Bourdieu establishes, it was in mid nineteenth-century Paris under the aegis of the pioneering modernists Gustave Flaubert and Charles Baudelaire that a semi-autonomous field of restricted cultural production would emerge based on a series of negations of the economic marketplace. Spurred by the crass materialism of Louis Napoleon's Second Empire, writers and artists established a cultural field in which economic failure, at least initially, came to signify artistic success, and a posture of disdain for the mainstream audience became a virtual requirement for any author aspiring for high cultural consecration. Gradually, and paradoxically, this pose itself became a promotional strategy, as an author's apparent indifference to success in the marketplace became in turn a marketable image. As recent monographs by Jaffe (2005), Goldman (2011), Galow (2011), Hammill (2007), Moran (2000) and Glass (2004) confirm, this modernist iteration of literary celebrity has been of particular interest to academics, who tend to invoke Bourdieu's theories in accounting for it. One may surmise that, insofar as literary studies is itself a restricted field of cultural production with its own forms of micro-celebrity, the academic attention to modernist celebrity may also be a mode of institutional self-reflection. As Williams confirms, "the academic star system is largely autonomous and self-contained, with a specific genealogy, operation and function" (2006: 376).

Under the post-World War II, postmodern dispensation the restricted and general fields of cultural production begin both to collapse into each other and to segment into semi-autonomous subfields serving specific taste communities. During this era, two institutions come of age as gatekeepers for literary celebrity: the prize industry and the creative writing program. The proliferating prize industry provides literary consecration across an ever expanding variety of platforms, from the international to the national to the generic, continuously catapulting authors into celebrity. Overlapping at a number of key points with the system of literary prizes is the creative writing program, which has emerged as a new form of patronage, enabling a semi-autonomous star system based in the academic circulation of personality and prestige. In this contemporary cultural field, celebrity is broadly accepted as an inevitable component of literary success, and authors are accustomed to, and frequently very talented at, the wide variety of practices, from readings and interviews to blogs and tweets, that have emerged to disseminate it. Starting with the enormously influential *Paris Review*, which established the interview as a literary genre in and of itself, the author interview has developed from the journalistic nuisance decried by Twain and Dickens to a cultural necessity accepted by all but the most reclusive writers. Reading tours, once reserved for only the most notable authors, are now *de rigueur* for any writer with a fan base. And with the rise of the internet, authors from Bret Easton Ellis to Amy Tan to Stephen King to Jackie Collins have Facebook pages and Twitter accounts, frequently managed by hired professionals. These venues are increasingly diverse and democratic, as indicated not only by the burgeoning numbers of ethnic, postcolonial, and openly gay writers who have received wide public acclaim and celebrity, but also by the increasing numbers of authors, such as Stephanie Meyer and E. L. James, whose global celebrity was achieved

almost entirely through the internet, bypassing traditional gatekeepers such as editors and critics. Under this newly diverse and highly segmented dispensation, the modes of celebrity associated with earlier eras persist but only as one choice among many.

The Poet Hero

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage made Byron famous and the constitutive confusion of author with protagonist was central to his celebrity. His public image was closely stitched to the brooding and mysterious characters he created, from Childe Harold to Manfred to the Corsair to Don Juan. The connection was more than metaphorical and can be seen to have inaugurated the autobiographical mandate for authors, particularly if they are male. Byron was one of the first in a long line of literary celebrities running up through Hemingway and beyond who felt obligated to undergo the adventures they depicted. The autobiographical mandate requires that author, narrator, and protagonist converge, enabling brand recognition, audience loyalty, and reader identification. It also inaugurates a new mode of interpretation that Mole usefully labels a "hermeneutic of intimacy" whereby literary texts "could only be understood fully by referring to their author's personality" (2007: 23).

Though Mole mentions a number of female literary celebrities from the Romantic era, including Mary Robinson and Letitia Landon, their obscurity relative to Byron and his cohort (and the fact that they frequently wrote under pseudonyms) confirms that this was a predominantly masculine tradition, reinforced by Byron's sustained association with Napoleon as a representative heroic figure. The Romantics came of age during a period of revolution and warfare across Europe and its colonial outposts, and both their poetry and their personas were inflected by the violent crucible from which modernity emerged. As a champion of parliamentary reform and of Greek independence, Byron consolidated what would become a canonical image of the poet as romantic revolutionary and cosmopolitan adventurer. The popularity of his literary creations was buttressed by his worldly achievements, providing a resilient model for future male writers to affirm their masculine credentials over and against the increasing feminization of literary culture. As McDayter confirms, Byromania could "never have taken place without the French Revolution and its attendant cultural anxieties" (2009: 26).

After the success of *Childe Harold*, Byron became a marketable name, but as an aristocrat (if a minor one) he refused to profit economically from it. Rather, he used his fame to leverage a social apotheosis as he now found himself feted by aristocrats across Europe. The profits from his poems went to John Murray, who made his own name as the publisher of Lord Byron, and whose offices received the deluge of fan mail addressed to the famous poet. Insofar as publishers rarely achieve the type of brand recognition that is customary in other industries, authorial names became a way of establishing and maintaining an identity and a reputation in a highly competitive and unpredictable environment. Murray would go

on to publish Robert Southey, Thomas Malthus, and Jane Austen, among others, establishing a precedent for the great publishing houses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which garnered reputations based in a recognizable stable of authorial names.

Austen's name stands out on Murray's list insofar as it didn't appear on the books of hers which he published. Rather, Austen's novels were published anonymously, and while she did make some money on them, her identity was not a component of their marketing, and her critical consecration would have to wait until after her death. Her case is symptomatic in this regard, indicating the degree to which the public sphere in which literary figures circulated during the Romantic era tended to exclude women, most of whom published pseudonymously or anonymously. Middle- and upper-class women were acknowledged as readers, especially of novels, and some did achieve public reputations as *salonnières*, particularly in France. But celebrity for women as authors in their own name would have to wait until later in the nineteenth century, when literary authorship became an exception to the rules excluding women from public life.

Making a Name

Charles Dickens and Mark Twain pioneered the practice of celebrity authorship in the nineteenth century. Both served their apprenticeships in journalism, the industry which became a key site for the negotiation and perpetuation of literary celebrity. And both became experts at the new modes of public performance that became increasingly common over the course of the nineteenth century. Dickens and Twain *performed* authorship publicly in forums that were only coming into being at the time, developing close interactive relationships with readers that became standard practice in the next century. While many of these forums still tended to exclude women, this changed over the course of the century, and literary celebrity became one of the more acceptable modes of entry for women into public life, as writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and others became widely read and recognized under their real names (though pseudonyms were still common, as the examples of George Sand and George Eliot confirm). And, with the international popularity of the slave narrative, African-American authors also began making public appearances and establishing public personas, though usually under the paternalistic patronage of prominent white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Lydia Maria Child.

In October of 1846, Charles Dickens wrote to his close friend and future biographer John Forster that he thought "a great deal of money might possibly be made ... by one's having Readings of one's own books. It would be an *odd* thing. I think it would take immediately" (quoted in Tomalin 2011: 184). The idea percolated for the next decade, while Dickens's renown, not only in England but in the United States and, in translation, across Europe continued to grow, increasingly manifested by the desire on the part of readers to have personal contact with the author. During his first visit to the United States, he had to spend two hours a day simply shaking hands

with people eager to meet the author whose characters had so fully entered into their lives. It became clear to Dickens that the reading tour was an idea whose time had come.

Dickens's readings were immensely popular. He already had an ancillary career in theatrical production and he proved to be highly talented at dramatizing the characters whose fame rivalled his own. In the 1850s and 1860s he read to sold-out audiences across England and the United States and he was energized by the acclaim. As he wrote to his sister in 1862, "success attends me everywhere ... and the great crowds I see every night all seem to regard me with affection as a personal friend" (quoted in Tomalin 2011: 324). This imagined intimacy became a crucial component of literary celebrity, and indeed celebrity in general, over the course of the nineteenth century. Increasingly, readers felt they had the right to expect personal contact with authors whose characters had touched them emotionally and whose voices were so familiar to them. The reading provided a venue in which this intimacy could be performed and experienced directly. The author reading extended the "hermeneutic of intimacy" into the lived experience of individual readers. As Chris Rojek affirms, intimacy with a celebrity is enabled, for the most part, by "para-social interactions" negotiated through media venues (2001: 52); the author reading supplements these interactions with actual face-to-face social contact between fan and celebrity, contact which can then be authenticated and memorialized through the ritual of the book signing. Readings, it should also be noted, were highly remunerative, generally more profitable than book sales, and Dickens had many dependents to support and properties to maintain.

By the time he embarked on his reading tours, Charles Dickens was an industry in and of himself. He was not only a famous author and theatrical producer but also an editor and gatekeeper within the expanding Anglophone literary field. As he was supplementing his income with reading tours he was also consolidating his position as a literary powerbroker with the establishment of a magazine called *All the Year Round*, of which he would be the sole publisher, proprietor and editor. The front page prominently announced in the vocabulary of the day that the weekly was "conducted by Charles Dickens" and he serialized most of his novels of the 1860s in its pages. Nevertheless, if Dickens's consolidation of his cultural power seems embodied by this exclusive proprietorship, it should still be affirmed that celebrity authorship is always a corporate affair, as the duties of managing and maintaining a literary career of scale and scope exceed the capacities of any single individual, no matter how energetic and inventive. In 1866, Dickens hired George Dolby to manage his reading tours, and his friend Forster continued to operate as his close advisor, really a literary agent *avant-la-lettre*, throughout his career. An ancillary army of advisors and editors and critics and agents and secretaries, not to mention housekeepers and nannies and estate managers, inevitably expands around the celebrity author, whose maintenance is a collective affair.

The man popularly known as Mark Twain also had lots of assistance in the negotiation and circulation of his literary celebrity, though he liked to deny it in his later years. The name itself, whose specific origins have, until recently, been the subject of sustained literary historical speculation, was originally a byline in the

frontier newspaper the *Territorial Enterprise*, and Samuel Clemens's apprenticeship in journalism deeply influenced both the style and substance of his narratives and the modes and methods of his celebrity. The name initially achieved national prominence through the wide circulation of the short story "The celebrated jumping frog of Calaveras County," itself a satirical take on celebrity. It was as a frontier humorist, not a "literary" figure, that the name Mark Twain initially achieved recognition.

This recognition was expanded and refined with the assistance of Elijah Bliss, the pioneer of subscription publishing. As Twain biographer Justin Kaplan affirms, the "subscription book, in Bliss's terms, was the people's book, and he was soon to advertise Mark Twain as 'the people's author'" (1966: 61). Twain's first book, *The Innocents Abroad*, was his best-selling title during his lifetime and it established him as a popular author across the nation at a time when most literary careers were limited to the genteel precincts of the Northeast, which housed all of the country's major publishers as well as its institutions of cultural consecration. Not only did most authors dismiss the heartland but books themselves were difficult to distribute there due to the lack of bookstores and the expense of transportation. Bliss's American Publishing Company provided a conduit to this large and neglected audience, sending salesmen out into the middle of the country to obtain prepaid subscriptions for titles to be issued in the following year, thereby allowing the company to stabilize its market and avoid the costly problem of overproduction. Under the aegis of the American Publishing Company, Twain bypassed the Northeast, going directly into the homes of farmers and small town folks across the continent. As Twain told his good friend William Dean Howells, "anything but subscription publishing is printing for private circulation" (quoted in Kaplan 1966: 62). He became far and away Bliss's bestselling author, consolidating the publisher's domination of the subscription market.

Like Dickens, Twain's popularity as an author was buttressed by his popularity as a lecturer. And also like Dickens, he found these public appearances almost irresistibly remunerative, though he grew to hate the grind of travelling. Twain's first lectures were in the American West in support of a series of accounts he had written for a Sacramento paper of his travels to Hawaii (then known as the Sandwich Islands) and they were immediately popular. Famously promoted with the tagline "The doors open at 7; the trouble begins at 8," public lectures solidified Twain's renown as a humorist and public figure. Eventually, he would become one of the most reliable and remunerative speakers for James Redpath's pioneering Lyceum Bureau, established in 1868. Originally billed as one of the Southwestern Humorists, he became an American institution whose style and voice were understood to be representative, both at home and abroad, of the country itself. Indeed, Twain arguably became the first American author to be globally celebrated as such, especially after his highly publicized 1895 world tour organized to pay off his creditors after he declared bankruptcy. He returned as a literary lion, dubbed the "Lincoln of our literature" by William Dean Howells.

Twain rarely trusted his publishers and managers and he made various, and usually ill-fated, attempts to consolidate control over his career and persona. He set up his own subscription publishing company under the name of his feckless nephew Charles Webster, and they had a great success with *The Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*,

the profits from which Twain squandered on his ill-fated investment in the Paige Typesetting Machine. He had a lifelong fascination with patents and trademarks and he made more than one attempt to register his name officially as a trademark in order to outflank what he considered to be the unacceptably short term of copyright in the United States; though he failed in the legal arena, the deployment of his name and signature both during his life and after his death reinforce an analogy between trademark and pen name. As I've argued elsewhere, the idea of the authorial name as a trademark "explicitly acknowledges a cultural relation of recognition between public and text, as opposed to a legal relation of property between author and text" (Glass 2004: 81). More than any other author of the nineteenth century, Mark Twain innovated and exploited this function of literary celebrity as a type of cultural brand name that can ensure reader recognition and loyalty.

Unlike Dickens, Twain for the most part followed the autobiographical mandate, writing first about his travels and then about his boyhood, and concluding his career by dictating a massive unfinished autobiography that is only now getting published in full. Dickens was a creator of unforgettable characters whose pathos he could recreate on stage; Twain was the one great creation of Samuel Clemens, and toward the end of his career the authorial image was as much a burden as a blessing. He published little and much of what he did write in the last 20 years of his life were brooding meditations on the moral depravity of humanity. Twain's career indicates one of the liabilities of the autobiographical mandate, which is that it limits one's literary resources. Generally speaking, Dickens and Twain present two contrasting versions of literary celebrity, one in which the author figures as the benevolent parent of his or her characters, and one in which avatars of the author figure as the central character in narratives based on that author's biography.

For African Americans both before and after the Civil War the achievement of simple literacy was the primary goal, seemingly rendering literary celebrity as a frivolous impossibility; in fact, the acquisition of literacy by escaped slaves became itself an aspect of abolitionist promotion, resulting in a peculiar star system in the service of debunking America's peculiar institution. And the figure at the apex of this industry was unquestionably Frederick Douglass, whose 1845 *Narrative of the Life* became a representative instance of the slave narrative, a highly popular genre on both sides of the Atlantic in the first half of the nineteenth century. The full title, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, indicates how the attainment of literacy and the autobiographical mandate converge in this uniquely American genre, spurring an African-American form of literary celebrity that extended into the postbellum years.

The *Narrative* was specifically published to prove that the "slave" of its title could write and, as became standard protocol for this genre, it was framed by para-textual testimonials to its authenticity. William Lloyd Garrison provides a preface affirming that "Mr. Douglass has very properly decided to write his own Narrative," and this preface by the man who at the time was Douglass's principal patron and advocate is followed by a letter from the Reverend Wendell Philips to Douglass proclaiming the "truth, candor, and sincerity" of the document to follow (Douglass 1845: 32, 36). Both men comment extensively on Douglass's power as a speaker, affirming that he

had already established himself as a public figure in this popular venue before the publication of his *Narrative*, which sold 5,000 copies in its first four months and made Douglass into a celebrity on both sides of the Atlantic.

Douglass quickly chafed under Garrison's paternalistic patronage. Using money donated from British abolitionists, he broke away and started his own magazine, first called *The North Star*, then renamed in quick succession *Frederick Douglass Weekly*, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, and *Douglass' Monthly*. As these last titles indicate, Douglass's name was now well known, and inextricably associated with the abolitionist cause; as with Dickens, his name alone invoked enough literary and editorial authority to support a masthead. Furthermore, Douglass wrote and rewrote his autobiography over the rest of his life, first as *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and then as *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881), issued in a revised edition in 1892, by which point he was undoubtedly the most famous African American in the world. Douglass's remarkable career inaugurates a specifically African-American form of literary celebrity wherein the author's achievement of literacy and liberation comes to represent the emancipatory possibilities for the race as a people. As Henry Louis Gates affirms, authors of slave narratives knew themselves to be writing "on behalf of the millions of silent slaves still held captive throughout the South" and that their stories were not only autobiographies but also emblems "of every black person's potential for higher education and the desire to be free" (2002: 2). The African-American literary tradition has since been shaped and reshaped by this specific iteration of the autobiographical mandate, carried forward in the next century by classics ranging from Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Douglass's career also inaugurates a pattern of conflict and collaboration between white patron and black writer that likewise extended into the twentieth century, as the publishing industry and other ancillary institutions of mainstream critical consecration would remain, at least until the Civil Rights era, in white hands, and the audience for African-American writers split between white and black constituencies of contrasting, and frequently conflicting, political persuasions.

Douglass was also a militant supporter of women's rights, allying him with the pioneering figures of the 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention and the generation of women who fought for Temperance, abolition, and the right to vote over the course of the nineteenth century. Many of these women, such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were also orators and authors, and though there was considerable cultural and political resistance to their causes, their careers also proved that there were exceptions to the rules excluding women from the public sphere. These exceptions were usually leveraged by way of the popular discourse of sentimentalism, which enabled women to enter into public discussion through a language of private feeling. Sentimental novels such as Susan Warner's *Wide, Wide World* (1850), Maria Susanna Cummins's *The Lamplighter* (1854), and, most spectacularly, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1845) were enormously popular and their authors enjoyed considerable celebrity. Not unlike Dickens, their personas tended to be parental and nurturing, a pose which was commonly duplicated in their attitude toward their readers, establishing a precedent that extended into the next century.

The public prominence of Stowe, Warner, and Cummins indicates that literary careers in the nineteenth century could provide women with access to a public arena that excluded them from more explicitly political roles. As Brenda Weber claims, the “great nineteenth-century surge in transnational publishing opportunities opened new fields of possibility where a woman could not only earn her own bread but could actively build her reputation” (2012: 4). Since writing is a private act which can be done from the home with minimal cost, many women found it to be a practical career choice, particularly if their household lacked a primary male breadwinner. Correlatively, the thematic focus of sentimental novels tended to be domestic life, legitimating female authorship as expertise in the field. And African-American women were not excluded from taking advantage of this exception. There were sentimentally inflected slave narratives, such as Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (though it should be noted that “Harriet Jacobs” was a pseudonym for Linda Brent), and after the Civil War a fledgling African-American periodical industry supported and sustained the careers of pioneering figures such as Pauline Hopkins, who was a prominent novelist, poet, dramatist and editor across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; as with Stowe, her public image was made palatable by the sentimental tropes of her literary output. If Dickens tended to figure as the loving father of his characters (and his readers), these women adopted the persona of the doting (and disciplinary) mother both in their narrative voices and in their authorial self-fashioning.

Nevertheless, women still frequently wrote under masculine pseudonyms on both sides of the Atlantic, as we have seen (Mary Anne Evans wrote as George Eliot; Charlotte Brontë published under the pseudonym Currer Bell). It wouldn’t be until the end of the century that this convention began to wane and women would feel free to write under their own names, and more explicitly about their own lives, without social opprobrium. This development is illustrated by the career of Louisa May Alcott, who started out writing romantic thrillers under a variety of pseudonyms but then achieved wide recognition with a series of semi-autobiographical novels under her own name. Nevertheless, as the domestic focus of those novels indicates, the terms and types of celebrity to which women might aspire continued to differ from those available to men.

Impersonal Personalities

In mid nineteenth-century France a mode of literary self-fashioning developed that was based in a categorical refusal of the engagement with the market economy practiced by writers such as Dickens and Twain. Loosely allied under the banner of “art for art’s sake,” writers in France, particularly after the inception of Louis Napoleon’s Second Empire, positioned themselves in explicit opposition to mainstream middle-class culture and the industries that supported it. Aesthetic value came to be understood as incommensurable with economic value, generating what Pierre Bourdieu calls the restricted field of cultural production, in which artists and writers produce not for the general public but for a small audience of each other. As Bourdieu

illustrates in *The Rules of Art* (1995), a host of ancillary institutions of critical evaluation and consecration, ranging from literary journals to artistic salons to aesthetic movements, were established during this era that came to constitute an autonomous artistic avant-garde. Over the next century this self-constituted avant-garde rose to prominence across the globe, though its home base remained in the Paris of its origins, which in turn became a lodestar and point of migration for any writer aspiring to high cultural stature.

The mode of self-fashioning that emerged alongside this development was explicitly eccentric and uncompromising, embodied in the figure of the dandy associated with the poet Charles Baudelaire, who both theorized and practiced its protocol of personal style. As Baudelaire specifies in his essay "The painter of modern life," dandies "have no other calling but to cultivate the idea of beauty in their persons" (1964: 27): that is to say, they perform in their own physiognomies and fashion choices the aesthetic ideal of art for art's sake. This aggressive assertion of personal style corresponds to the cult of originality that developed around the artist during this period. On the one hand, style itself increasingly became the subject of the artwork; thus Flaubert, writing of *Madame Bovary*, claimed he would like to write "a book about nothing ... which would be held together by the strength of its style" (quoted in Steegmuller 1939: 247). On the other hand, style becomes, in essence, the signature of the artist, the mark of distinction whereby a literary work can achieve differentiation and distinction. In the modernist artistic field, aesthetic originality and personal style became the *sine qua non* of the successful artist and the basis of his (and they were usually male) renown. As Aaron Jaffe affirms, the modernist "conception of authorship – as the distinguishing imprimatur of exemplary artistic consciousness – enables the author's name to circulate as a type of rarified commodity" (2005: 55).

The logic of negation that determined avant-garde aesthetic value also meant that failure in the general field of cultural production became equated with success in the restricted field; once again Baudelaire is representative, as his early death in obscurity comes to represent the tragic fate of unrecognized genius. The melodrama of mainstream rejection becomes *de rigueur* during this era, epitomized by the starving artist whose work is only recognized after a (usually) early and impecunious demise. However, the artist's stark opposition to the mainstream marketplace, as Bourdieu reminds us, is in reality a pose, an "interest in disinterestedness" that both conceals and enables passage between the restricted and general fields of cultural production and, in consequence, provides terms of conversion from aesthetic to economic value (1993: 40). The logic is temporal and dictates that failure precede success; as Braudy affirms, the literary career takes the shape of a "cult of failure in the present to ensure celebration in the future" (1997: 488). The standard career arc becomes one in which an artist is initially accepted by a cultural coterie but rejected by the mainstream, after which this very rejection becomes the basis for a later critical canonization, consecrated by the apprenticeship in obscurity. The passage from outlaw to classic comes to epitomize the temporal logic of the avant-garde and to represent a template upon which a successful modernist career would be mapped. Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century this career arc became

institutionalized; bohemian communities and little magazines blossomed in big cities across the globe and virtually every major modernist artist served an apprenticeship in one of them. Furthermore, travel to Paris became mandatory for aspiring artists, making the avant-garde increasingly exilic and cosmopolitan.

One key literary expression of these circumstances emerged in the subgenre of the *kunstlerroman*, the novel of artistic development that became central to the modernist enterprise. Generally speaking this subgenre, epitomized by James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, depicts the development of a young artist up to the point he becomes capable of writing the narrative in which he figures as the protagonist. However, many extended further into the literary career to depict the depredations of celebrity, resulting in what John Cawelti deems "the most interesting twentieth-century development in the relationship between celebrity and literature," which is "the use by a number of major writers of their celebrity person as an integral part of their art" (1977: 171). Thus Jack London's autobiographical novel *Martin Eden* of 1909 concludes with the protagonist's recognition that "Martin Eden, the famous writer, did not exist. Martin Eden, the famous writer, was a vapor that had arisen in the mob-mind, and by the mob-mind had been thrust into the corporeal being of Mart Eden the hoodlum and sailor" (1967: 454). In this extension of the autobiographical mandate, literary celebrity and its liabilities become the subject and theme. Thus Gertrude Stein addresses the identity crisis she suffered after becoming famous in *Everybody's Autobiography* and Ernest Hemingway, in his nonfiction texts of the thirties, *Death in the Afternoon* and *Green Hills of Africa*, repeatedly recurs to the issue of how destructive literary success can be for literary talent, especially in the United States. By the middle of the twentieth century, the trope of the author destroyed by success had become practically a cliché, continuously reaffirmed by writers such as London, Hemingway and Faulkner who proved incapable of replicating their early critical successes.

For poets, the struggle was somewhat different, partly because the market for modernist poetry was always restricted and partly because the relationship between "personality" and literary expression figures differently in lyric poetry than in novels. T. S. Eliot's foundational essay "Tradition and the individual talent" delineates the paradoxical position of the modernist poet relative to mainstream recognition. Leveraging the association of personality with popular culture, Eliot insists that great poetry is impersonal, and he emphasizes that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." But then he adds, "of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things," establishing that the "personality" of the modernist poet consists in an effacement of personality (1964: 10–11). Eliot's priestly pose was the institutional descendent of the dandy insofar as it codified the high cultural disdain for popular culture, in turn creating a sanctified mode of selectively entering into it, as Eliot himself became a well-known literary figure in middlebrow venues.

This dynamic of disdain for the marketplace, for both novelists and poets, was highly gendered, especially insofar as mainstream mass culture was conceived as both feminine and feminizing. As Andreas Huyssen has established, for many

modernist artists and writers “mass culture is somehow associated with woman while, real, authentic culture remains the prerogative of men” (1986: 47). Both Eliot’s impersonality and Hemingway’s machismo were stoic, masculine poses, formulated partly in response to what were considered to be the feminizing forces of the marketplace. There were many women in the avant-garde circles of the twentieth century but, with the notable exception of Gertrude Stein (who considered her genius to be “masculine”), they for the most part played the ancillary, if nevertheless crucial, role of intermediaries, editing journals, running bookshops, and championing and enabling the careers of figures such as Joyce and Eliot.

In truth, there were many female literary celebrities in the early twentieth century, ranging from Edna St. Vincent Millay to Edna Ferber to Dorothy Parker, but they were for the most part relegated to what became known as middlebrow culture, which was looked upon with particular suspicion and disdain by modernist tastemakers. Nevertheless, as the examples of Millay and Parker indicate, women writers now had access to public postures which, while frequently controversial, were culturally viable and economically remunerative. Millay’s provocative performance of flapper sexual autonomy and Parker’s public display of acid wit represented emergent feminist models of literary celebrity in an era when high cultural consecration was still, for the most part, reserved for men. As Faye Hammill has affirmed, a methodological “recuperation of the middlebrow” brings to light a generation of female literary celebrities on both sides of the Atlantic between the wars who have been neglected by literary histories focusing on high modernism (2007: 7).

Also in the first half of the twentieth century a proto-postcolonial canon emerged, with reputations frequently formulated and enacted along European modernist models. Indigenous writers, almost invariably members of higher castes and classes and educated in Western school systems, circulated in the avant-garde communities of Paris, London and New York, as the European centers of modernism attracted young intellectuals from the colonial periphery. In 1913, the Nobel Prize in literature was awarded to Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, whose opposition to the British Raj was well known. In the United States, the Harlem Renaissance brought a variety of African-American authors, both male and female, into public prominence, frequently in alliance with other figures of the African diaspora, though the movement was haunted by the specter of white patronage and the uncomfortably schizophrenic realities of writing for a racially divided audience. Generally speaking, African-American and ethnic literature in the United States before World War II was, like literature by women, frequently assimilated to the middlebrow, and its authors were subjected to the uncomfortable mandate that they perform mainstream stereotypes of their group identity in order to be successful in a cultural field whose gatekeepers were almost invariably white.

Second Selves

This all changed in the postwar era, when African-American, postcolonial and non-Western authors such as Pablo Neruda, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Wole Soyinka,

Toni Morrison, Kenzaburo Oe and others were catapulted into international prominence. Decolonization produced a proliferation of “new nations,” all of which had literary figures invested in buttressing political independence with cultural identity and prestige; the establishment of UNESCO and other institutions of cultural diplomacy and exchange in turn provided patronage and publicity for authors from what became known as the Third World. Literary authorship in this new global environment took on an air of political and ethical prestige and many prominent postcolonial authors were also, officially and unofficially, diplomats and political power brokers. In this age of heightened cultural diplomacy, celebrity authorship became truly global.

Literary prizes, spearheaded and symbolized by the Nobel, were central to the process of consecration and evaluation in this international network. As James English has established, the Nobel Prize in the postwar era has “become a means of articulating ... a particular category of literature that might be recognized as properly ‘global’” (2005: 304). Nevertheless, the literary standards by which such authors were evaluated still tended to be conventionally modernist, as the great figures of high modernism, most of whom received Nobel Prizes in the immediate postwar period, had now been thoroughly canonized by the American University, whose burgeoning population became a key readership for world literature. In essence, the postwar era witnesses a gradual democratization of modernist authorship, generating a category that Mark McGurl calls “high cultural pluralism,” literature that “joins the high literary values of modernism with a fascination with the experience of cultural difference and the authenticity of the ethnic voice” (2009: 32).

If decolonization abroad expanded the number of national voices in the developing canon of world literature, new social movements in Europe and the United States pluralized the middle class across the Western World. And the key engine of this pluralization was the expanding university system, in which the emergent, and increasingly popular, discipline of creative writing produced a new generation of authors invested in combining their education in the modernist classics with their own struggles as ethnic, racial or sexual minorities. As Louis Menand has recently detailed, between the years 1945 and 1975 undergraduate enrollment in the American university system increased by almost 500 percent, while graduate enrollment increased by an astonishing 900 percent, expanding and diversifying both audience and authorship in the postwar world (2010: 64).

The autobiographical mandate persists and even intensifies for this generation, as “write what you know” and “find your voice” become pedagogical mantras and the experience of coming of age as a minority folds into the story of literary apprenticeship. Philip Roth can be taken as representative in this regard, both insofar as he strove to accommodate the drama of ethnic American identity to the evaluative protocols of the European modernist classics and also as he was forced to come to terms with the collision between mass cultural celebrity and high cultural reputation. Roth’s ingenious solution to the contradictions generated by these challenges was, as Moran confirms, to invent an authorial avatar, Nathan Zuckerman, who would rehearse and rehash them in his stead, enabling the author “to interrogate his celebrity in an open and self-questioning way” (2000: 110).

Roth's trilogy *Zuckerman Bound* takes celebrity as its central topic, enabling him to condemn it culturally while simultaneously exploiting it as a literary subject. Taking the autobiographical mandate to its ultimate conclusion, Roth chronicles the career of an author who becomes exhausted by himself as the source material for his fiction, and dismayed by how his audience confuses him with his protagonists. Roth is able to have his cake and eat it, too; he becomes both a contemporary celebrity and a classic author. And while the Zuckerman cycle is unique, it is also, as I have recently argued at more length, "representative, insofar as his creation is a response to a contradiction that confronts any author who aspires for lasting literary consecration in a culture industry focused on contemporaneous acclaim" (Glass 2014).

Roth's career reveals that the modernist pose of masculine aloofness from and disdain for mass culture persists under a postmodern dispensation; indeed it can be seen to reach a sort of contrastive apogee in the Pynchonian figure of the author-recluse. But it persists only as one option among many, and the rise of high cultural pluralism has diversified the population of authors who can lay claim to cultural consecration and the attitudes they can adopt toward it. In particular, the rise of ethnic and postcolonial female authors, from Sandra Cisneros to Isabel Allende to Amy Tan to Maxine Hong Kingston, indicates the degree to which the protocols of consecration and recognition have entered a postfeminist age. And this age has witnessed the emergence of a variety of ways to perform literary celebrity which manage to maintain high cultural respectability without succumbing to the melodrama of resistance to the marketplace.

A symptomatic collision between these models of literary celebrity occurred in September 2001 when Oprah Winfrey selected Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections* for her televised book club. As revealed in Boris Kachka's (2013) recent history of the publishing firm, Franzen's representatives at Farrar, Straus and Giroux were ecstatic, but Franzen, famously, was uncomfortable with this collision between the high cultural reputation he had already achieved and the mass cultural onslaught that would inevitably follow upon his selection. A number of identities and values came into conflict in this highly publicized and much written-about dust up. Oprah not only represented mass cultural acclaim, her show also reinforced the association between such acclaim and the predominantly female readership to which she catered. Many of her previous selections, such as Wally Lamb's *She's Come Undone* and Maeve Binchy's *Tara Road*, represented the middlebrow tradition of fiction for women within which Franzen clearly didn't want to be situated, even if his domestic subject matter was arguably appropriate to it. Finally, as a female, African-American television personality, Oprah seemed almost too perfectly opposed to Franzen's white literary masculinity on all axes, invoking a series of historical antecedents for the protocols that seemed to be threatened by her selection.

In the end, though Oprah rescinded her offer, nothing was seriously threatened. Rather, the confrontation and its conclusion revealed the degree to which high cultural acclaim has been thoroughly assimilated into mass cultural renown, and this new high pluralist postmodern reality is epitomized by the figure who ballasts Oprah's claim to cultural prestige, Toni Morrison. As the Nobel Prize-winning

Faulkner of the late twentieth century, Morrison's literary credentials are impeccable, and her frequent appearances on Oprah's show provided it with a gravitas that didn't conflict with its talk show format. The powerful alliance between Winfrey and Morrison illustrates how high cultural pluralism has eased the tension between literary reputation and popular acclaim. Morrison's comfort with the talk show format, and the fact that her appearance there poses no challenge to her literary reputation, illustrates that we have entered a new era in which cultural consecration no longer depends on a division between a restricted and a general field of cultural production. Winfrey and Morrison have melded the maternal, and even sororal, intimacy fostered by figures such as Harriet Beecher Stowe with the more austere and elevated authority represented by William Faulkner; and while this syncretism has generated a degree of resistance in certain quarters, it has clearly not jeopardized their cultural influence. As Kathleen Rooney affirms, more "than any other cultural authority, Winfrey promoted the bridging of the high-low chasm that cleaves the American literary landscape" (2005: 14). Cecilia Konchar Farr goes even further, celebrating the book club as "a triumph of cultural democracy" (2005: 99).

The contemporary cultural field that sustains this democracy can be described as a massive middlebrow marketplace subdivided into a multitude of literary niches, each of which features its own opportunities (and pitfalls) for the performance of celebrity. These semi-autonomous subfields line up both with genres and demographics, all of which feature their own markets, professional associations, prizes and informal networks. From memoirs to mysteries, from Maori to Nigerian, from graphic novels to electronic poetry, every literary niche is now peopled by celebrated authors who are in close contact with their readers. And across all these platforms and networks, celebrity is accepted and embraced as a legitimate mode of interaction with a specific audience, usually involving a performance of group membership with that audience.

Coda: Authorial Afterlives

Mark Twain spent much of the final decade of his life lobbying for lengthening the term of copyright in the United States, which at the time was 42 years. Disdainful of the argument that texts should become public property after their term of copyright expired, Twain insightfully proclaimed that the "government does not give the book to the *public*, it gives it to the *publishers*" (Fatout 1976: 535). As Twain anticipated, it would be on a publisher's backlist that his name would survive and in a publisher's bank account that the profits derived from it would be deposited. But Twain had an ingenious plan to outflank the publishers and it involved the massive autobiography that he was currently dictating. As he wrote to William Dean Howells, the autobiography would "not be published independently, but only as *notes* (copyrightable) to my existing books. Their purpose is, to add 28 years to the life of the existing books" (Smith and Gibson 1960: 779). Of course this plan was not realized, but the massive and never completed autobiography, alongside the reams of other material left unpublished upon his death, ensured that new texts by Mark Twain continued to be

released over the course of the twentieth century, as each new editor of what is now known at the Mark Twain Project issued previously unpublished material. Currently housed at the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley, the Project is only now issuing the entire text of the autobiography in three enormous volumes, each with a scholarly and a popular edition.

As Twain's lengthy afterlife affirms, the academic archive and the publisher's backlist are the two principal cultural locations where the authorial name persists after the death of the person to whom it refers. And if the archive and the backlist are where celebrity authors go to die, the humanities classroom is where they get brought back to life. Most of the authors discussed above have become staples on college syllabi and, therefore, are both reliable steady sellers for publishers in a marketplace where the vast majority of new books fail and popular objects of study for professors eager to enhance their cultural prestige. It is at this crucial juncture that the ephemerality of contemporaneous celebrity gradually morphs into something more like the traditional protocols of posthumous fame; no longer tethered to their biographical referents, authors live on as markers of lasting cultural *and* economic value.

Notes

- 1 Since my field is English, this essay focuses for the most part on the Anglophone tradition, with a crucial excursus into French literature; and since my area of specialization is American literature, the history of literary celebrity in the United States plays a central role in my narrative. Nevertheless, insofar as the industrial revolution that began in England later swept the world and came to represent the inception of modernity as such, and insofar as Paris can be considered, as Pascale Casanova has proclaimed, the "Greenwich Meridian of Literature" (2004: 87) and a central powerbroker in the global circuits of literary celebrity in the modern era, the developments that are chronicled here and the methods used for their analysis should apply, with due consideration of cultural differences, to the nature and history of literary celebrity in other national traditions.
- 2 The origins of the brand name are closely related to the rise of the trademark as a new form of intellectual property in the late nineteenth century. Since the purpose of both the trademark and the brand name is to obtain and maintain customer loyalty for mass-produced goods, most studies of them have focused on industries whose products are uniform. Thus W. F. Haug, in his landmark *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics*, offers Chiquita Banana and Melitta Coffee filters as examples of how "the trans-regional brand-names of large companies impose themselves on the public's experience and virtually assume the status of natural phenomena" (1986: 25). Naomi Klein, whose highly influential study *No Logo* famously argues that "the product always takes a back seat to the real product, the brand" (2000: 21), still illustrates much of her argument with companies that mass-produce uniform commodities such as shoes and coffee. Nevertheless, scholars of celebrity commonly use the terminology of the brand to explain the significance of the famous person's name; as Mole confirms, celebrity turns the "proper name into a brand name" (2007: 16). For a sample of recent scholarship on branding and promotional culture, see Aronczyk and Powers (2010).

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The Changing Face of Celebrity and the Emergence of Motion Picture Stardom

Gaylyn Studlar

What his career proved is that there is almost no limit to how far a man can go in America if he looks good on a horse; and Buffalo Bill looked so good on a horse that it was almost as if the animal had been created just for him to ride.

Larry McMurtry, "Inventing the West"

What a pity they did not invent the cinema sooner. What a career I could have had!

Sarah Bernhardt (quoted in Menefee, *Sarah Bernhardt*)

Celebrity culture is now used as a term to characterize twenty-first century discursive and economic practices that produce individuals who, at least for a time, are recognizable to a large segment of the public. Richard Schickel has claimed that celebrity was a twentieth-century invention, tied directly to the financial overvaluation of and publicity hype surrounding movie stars (1985: 21, 47), a conclusion shared with Chris Rojek (2001: 16). However, others believe that its origins were much earlier. Joseph Roach argues that Stuart Restoration theater was a nodal point in the development of celebrity as fascination with actors took on new public forms (2007: 3). Leo Braudy traces the emergence of fame in Western culture, emphasizing the importance of the Reformation, revolutions upending monarchical power, and the philosophical rise of the valuation of individual freedom (1986: 6–8). Along with these changes came admiration for the man whose merit – whose genius – trumped aristocratic birth. Focusing on the post-Enlightenment romanticization of individuality and the rise of industrialization and urban-centered, consumer culture, Fred Inglis makes the claim that George Gordon, Lord Byron, emerged as one of the first modern celebrities. The charm, glamour, and scandal publicly attached to Bryon marked a new form of "celebrity embossed by renown" (Inglis 2010: 64–70).

In spite of differences, many accounts of the history of celebrity share two fundamentals: (1) the idea that it differs from fame because it is not automatically moored

to significant accomplishment(s) in traditional arenas of cultural contribution: artistic, military, political, religious (Inglis 57). Daniel Boorstin's pithy (or glib) definition of a celebrity as someone who "is well known for his well-knownness" points to the now commonly held notion that celebrity is a social status independent of actual achievement (1992: 49). Boorstin suggests that publicity or manufactured hype can create celebrity, but his remarks also point to the importance of reception: the quality of being known as a celebrity depends on others: it is incontrovertibly social – it depends on the masses knowing of the celebrity. The other fundamental point made about the origins of celebrity is that: (2) it is dependent on the rise of mass media and urban life.

Even in recent historically minded accounts of the rise of celebrity, the singular traits of a celebrity often seem to trump consideration of the conditions and processes that make a public persona meaningful in a specific sociocultural context. This essay seeks to complicate that historical picture of celebrity, arguing that it is a phenomenon complex in production and nuanced in impact, dependent not just on one appeal, industry, technology, national context or direction of meaning (the "flow" from organization to audience/public). A genealogy that recognizes various modes and moments of celebrity might help ameliorate views that conflate the impact of different media industries or venues, collapse the force fields of the local, the national, and the international, or ignore the social importance of potential differences in reception of celebrity based on gender, class, race, and generation.

The genealogy of celebrity reveals not only commonalities over the years but also notable adjustments or changes, making the phenomenon a fitful and unstable creation of ad hoc practices as well as of more lasting systems and processes, some quite purposeful in their aim of creating celebrity and others that appear to spread an individual's fame – or infamy (what I would call "dark celebrity") – as the corollary of other, more primary goals. In this history, the emergence of motion pictures and their system of selling a particular construction of celebrity – the motion picture "star" – appears as a watershed moment of systemization with an economic and ideological focus.

The oft-articulated assumption that the private life of the celebrity as it is known to the public overtakes or becomes more important than the person's professional accomplishments is expressed by Christine Geraghty, who claims: "The term celebrity indicates someone whose fame rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work" (2007: 99). This seems an overstatement, or at least one requiring historical qualification as well as attention to gender.

One figure who stands out as worthy of attention in charting the emergence of a mode of celebrity removed from "the sphere of their work" is George Bryan "Beau" Brummell (1778–1840). His importance resides in: (1) his emphasis on visibility as the center of celebrity; and (2) his impact on celebrity as a role model for personal style. Initiating a self-obsessed masculinity associated with urbanity and impertinence, Brummell fascinated England. He was admired for his rigorous pursuit of cleanliness and understated elegance, but he and the type of masculinity he inspired, the "dandy," were widely dismissed for pretentiousness, superficiality, and effeminacy (Moers 1960: 181–4).

Brummell and the dandies who modeled themselves after him tested gender conventions as well as social norms. Visual caricatures often emphasized the dandy as unmanly, a pouting, foppish affront to masculine naturalness. In *Sartor Resartus*, serialized in *Fraser's* in 1833–4, Thomas Carlyle dismissed the type: “A Dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office, and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes” (quoted in Moers 1960: 181).¹

Brummell has been credited with revolutionizing male fashion, but he was more than a clotheshorse, and dandyism’s political and social implications for masculinity were wider and deeper than his impact on Regency era England. Brummell illustrated how a man’s claim to social power could be based on appearance and attitude rather than on land and lineage. The dandy he modeled came to be associated with changes in social stratification and in the decline of the aristocracy as revolutionary fervor took hold in the Old and New Worlds in the late eighteenth century (Moers 1960: 12).

Brummell’s origins were not aristocratic: he was descended from the upper-level servant class. His father, William, was the son of a servant, but he rose quickly from being an upper-level servant himself to becoming private secretary of the Prime Minister, Lord North (Kelly 2006: 23–5). The Beau’s own rise anticipates the radical democratization of celebrity attributed to movie stars, but it was dependent on privilege and access to aristocracy. He obtained a first-class education at Eton and Oxford, and it was at school he reportedly met the Prince of Wales, who, like Brummell, was fascinated with fashion. With the prince’s help, Brummell’s place in high society was made.

As Brandy suggests, what Brummell did in his friendship with the prince subverted hierarchies of power even as it created a new model of celebrity: “By telling the oafish Prince Regent (later George IV) what to wear in order to look like a ruler, he illustrates the pitiful inadequacy of both the monarchical version of the hero and the courtier version of the audience that for so long had been the only model of fame” (1986: 405). Brummell was socially challenging, a provocative presence wherever he went, to be debated and discussed beyond any affectations in attire. Deborah Houk explains: “The dandy intentionally designed not only his dress but also his whole manner of being around the notion of difference in order that he might stand out and be noticed” (1997: 59). In other words, the dandy sought to become instantly recognizable and worthy of attention by being a spectacle of superior difference (figure 4.1). Thus, self-creation became Brummell’s *profession*.

Brummell’s celebrity traded also on provocation and the inversion of social power. Seeking a shocking impact but registering nonchalance rather than obvious effort, Brummell was potentially dangerous in taking as his object of scorn anything (or anyone) associated with vulgarity – whether originating in the higher or lower classes (Moers 1960: 122). His disdain for bourgeois clichés was expressed in witty utterances or ironic behavior that marked him as impertinent. To keep his ambivalent social status, the dandy had to walk a fine line with regard to society’s protocols. Otherwise, he might be forced to pay for his cutting wit. Ultimately, Brummell paid dearly for a notorious public put-down of the Prince of Wales, mythologized in many different versions. Their relationship was already on the decline when the Prince of



Figure 4.1 Caricature of George Bryan “Beau” Brummell by Richard Dighton, 1805 (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

Wales refused to acknowledge Brummell at a ball. Brummell turned to the Marquess of Worcester (or Lord Alvanley or Lord Moira – depending on who told the story) and then asked (referring to the Prince Regent): “Who is your fat friend?” (Kelly 2006: 189–90). After losing the protection of the Prince Regent, Brummell was vulnerable to creditors. Dogged by enormous gambling debts, he fled to France in 1816. The Beau spent the next 24 years in penurious exile, dying at age 61 of the ravages of syphilis in Bon Sauveur asylum in Caen. In spite of his bad end, Brummell’s elegance and wit, originality and style inspired a long line of dandies who were stereotyped

as obsessed with gambling and fashion, finely bred horses and not so finely bred women. He became a model for masculinity that measured its success not by professional accomplishment and virtue, but by personal style and consumption.

In spite of widespread attacks on dandyism, Brummell's influence continued to reverberate. After his exile, his witticisms were collected and published, and he appeared, in fictionalized form, in at least two novels. He was thought by many to have been one model for the protagonist of Byron's satirical poem *Don Juan* (Kelly 2006: 173). Socially prominent celebrities like Count D'Orsay (who charmed even Carlyle) asserted the ideals of dandyism, which proved resilient enough to cross national borders (especially to France) and, arguably, to cross gender (Gill 2007). In making himself a public persona whose stylistic superiority could be imitated by others, Brummell demonstrated the move toward a mode of celebrity that would gain rather than lose momentum as mass media expanded the coverage of fashion and style as crucial in the construction of "self" in the increasingly consumer- and urban-centered late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Advances in printing, in travel and communication, and in visual and sound reproduction made the production of celebrities and the discourse of celebrity ubiquitous in the Western world. The development of cheaply printed mass media was one milestone for disseminating celebrity, most particularly in journalism aimed at middle-class audiences. Photography made likenesses of celebrities not only more accessible to the middle and lower classes but imbued these likenesses (cartes de visite and then cabinet cards) with authenticity or assumptions of "truth" rooted in the mechanical apparatus. The breakthrough of the half-tone process in the 1880s that could combine print and mechanically recorded images widened the public sphere of celebrity by allowing newspapers and magazines to refine the selling power of combined narrative and visuals.

Certainly, in the nineteenth century cheap mass printing, photography, the telephone, the telegraph, Edison's phonograph and, at its close, motion pictures, were marshaled to help spread and sustain celebrity. Entrepreneurs and impresarios like P. T. (Phineas Taylor) Barnum, Charles Frohman, and the youthful Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr, as well as performers like Sarah Bernhardt and William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody (1846–1917) harnessed these technologies in varying degrees to organize and disseminate celebrity-centered appearances and news. Nevertheless, the consumption of celebrity is dependent on more than communication technology and the organized use of it to generate public interest. It also depends on imagination and cultural context.

Gender and sexuality often figure centrally in articulations of celebrity that have significant impact on the imagination of the public. Susan Glenn usefully recognizes celebrity as "the creation of a distinctive public persona that would make the performer appear to be an exemplary or unusual representative of his or her gender" (2000: 27). That was certainly true of Beau Brummell. With very different social meanings, it was also true of Buffalo Bill Cody who, early in his stage career, was praised for his embodiment of an ideal American masculinity. Newspaper reviewers wrote of him in startlingly effusive terms: "Buffalo Bill is a magnificent specimen of a man, and has a native grace of movement that is quite captivating"; "Tall beyond ordinary men, lithe and supple in form, with a finely cut head adorned by flowing

black hair reaching almost to the shoulders, he is all that the pen of [Ned] Buntline has ever painted him” (quoted in Kasson 2000: 24). Cody was never much of an actor, but such reactions anticipate the hyperbolic emphasis on the sex appeal of movie stars as a central element in the construction of celebrity.

Cross-fertilizing the promotion of Cody’s live performances were Buffalo Bill dime novels initially authored by Buntline and then by numerous other authors over the course of 30-plus years. These “penny dreadfuls” hammered home Cody’s credentials as an authentic hero, not just a good-looking man imitating a plainsman. Issues of *The Buffalo Bill Stories* (1881) warned readers to “Beware of Wild West imitations of the Buffalo Bill stories. They are about fictitious characters. The Buffalo Bill weekly is the only weekly containing the adventures of Buffalo Bill, (Col. W. F. Cody), who is known all over the world as the king of the scouts” (Brandeis Special Collections online).

To reach the widest possible audience, Cody not only exploited a variety of media but also traded on the merging of reality and fiction that remains a trope in constructing celebrity personas. As Richard White suggests, Cody blended reality and performance seamlessly, stepping off the stage to return as an army scout with the Fifth Cavalry during the time of Custer’s defeat at Little Big Horn and again during the Ghost Dance rebellion, “each time incorporating aspects of his experience into the show” and vice versa (1994: 32). Key to the Cody myth was his reported avenging of Custer’s death by killing the Cheyenne warrior Hay-o-wei (“Yellow Hand”). It is claimed that he dressed for the “duel” in his stage costume (White 1994: 34). Cody’s version of this event (contested by some), along with Hay-o-wei’s war bonnet – and scalp – became iconic elements of Cody’s dime novel presentations, his stage melodramas, his Wild West performances, and the feature film he made in his old age.

Joy Kasson refers to Cody as “arguably the most famous American of his time” (2000: 5). His main claim to fame and the central source of his income was his development of “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” (not a “show” he asserted). Assisted by manager/publicists Nate Salsbury and John Burke, Cody became expert in promotion that highlighted his iconic visual presence as the kind of virile American man who “Won the West.” Posters for Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World used the word “celebrity” to characterize him, and an 1898 poster shows Cody and Napoleon Bonaparte sitting on white horses (but facing in opposite directions) (figure 4.2). A caption tells viewers that artist Rosa Bonheur (shown sitting between the men with her easel), represents “Art Perpetuating Fame.” The artist mediates the presence of these two historical celebrities, both conquering heroes equalized by their visual treatment.

Cody’s physical magnetism was part of his exemplary personification of ideals that could be appreciated by women as well as men, by Europeans as well as Americans. Although Buffalo Bill’s Wild West played across two continents and before kings and queens, Cody could not stave off the effects of the passage of time. He made millions, but bad investments and unscrupulous business partners forced him to sell out in 1913, and he joined Sells Floto Circus. With one last hope for pulling himself out of debt and immortalizing the frontier West as he believed it to be, Cody turned to the

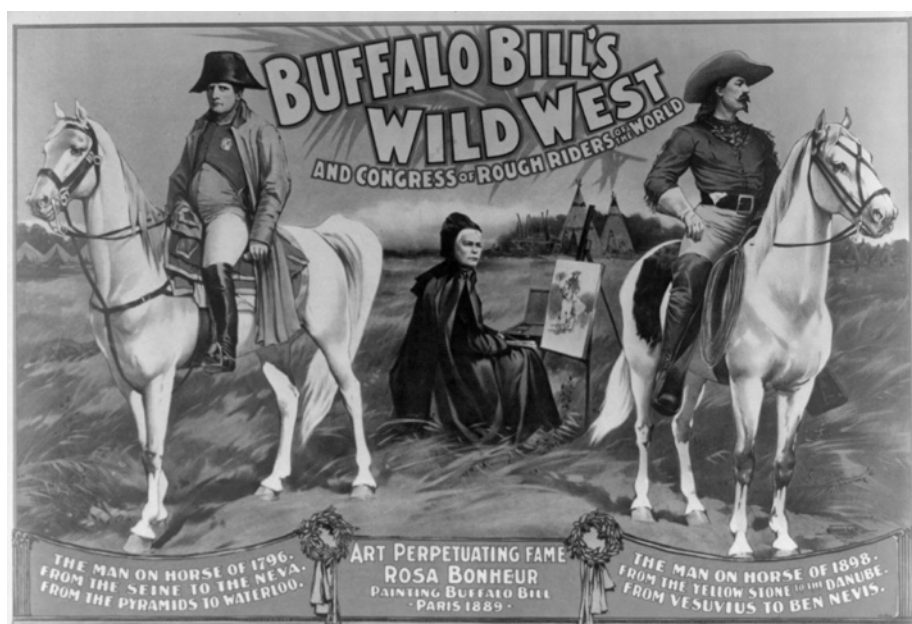


Figure 4.2 Poster for Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC)

movies. Borrowing money, he made a feature, *Indian Wars* (1914), two and a half hours long, that sought to reenact the most important battles in the Plains Wars. Staging reenactments on location and depicting events with survivors' participation, the film stirred controversy but only indifferent audience response (Sagala 2013: 132–5).

Cody's long-lived popularity revealed the force of a powerful combination – masculine beauty, the cachet of frontier heroism, and the drumbeat of publicity – in establishing widespread cultural interest in Cody as a symbol of the adventure and romance of the American West. Cody's celebrity personified nostalgia ideals of the frontier, solidifying its symbolic meaning even as it was closing. Yet his readiness to stage real experience and then reenact that “reality” in his entertainment performances not only fueled fascination with him as a living embodiment of America's frontier experience but also provided a potent model for future celebrity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

There are remarkable parallels but also remarkable differences in the construction and reception of Cody's contemporary, Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923). Unlike Cody, the actress's celebrity exploited the transgression of gender ideals rather than their admirable embodiment. Bernhardt was satirized and condemned, appreciated as an accomplished actress but also subject to a highly judgmental response to her throwing over of deeply held notions of proper womanly behavior and appearance.

Because of controversy, not in spite of it, Bernhardt's celebrity was a milestone. She was an actress whose eccentricities and transgressions of gender conventions assumed a central role in the way she was sold to the public as an attraction that



Figure 4.3 Sarah Bernhardt in costume for *Théodora*; photographic portrait by William Downey, ca. 1884 (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

whetted public curiosity and was worthy of attention (see, for example, figure 4.3). As the magazine *Puck* noted in November 1880, a short time after the French actress arrived in the United States: “To be thin, to go up in balloons, to paint, to sculpt, to repose in coffins and to affect the society of skeletons ought to be enough to make any woman famous; but it appears that Mlle. Sadie Bernhardt has another specialty – she acts” (quoted in Marks 2000: 33). No wonder Bernhardt was sometimes called “Sarah Barnum” in the press. As Susan Glenn argues, “By adopting Barnumism, Bernhardt ushered in a new cultural phenomenon: the egotistical female artist who not only promotes her plays but actively construct, exhibits, and advertises her own curious and flamboyant personality” (2000: 29).

Crossing low and high culture, US impresario P. T. Barnum was often regarded as the unrivaled master of developing strategies of paid promotion, free publicity, and

the use of “humbug” to sell attractions that might not be all he claimed. He institutionalized a publicity machine that could sell all manner of attractions, the natural (Jenny Lind) and the unnatural (The Feejee Mermaid) whether in tours across the country or at his American Museum. Barnum was famous for his oft-repeated remark: “There’s a sucker born every minute” even as he also was quoted as saying: “I don’t believe in duping the public, but I believe in first attracting and then pleasing them” (Kunhardt et al. 1995: 47). Although seemingly contradictory, both statements could be seen as underscoring American advertising and the construction of celebrity into the twenty-first century.

When Sarah Bernhardt arrived in the US in 1880, press agent Edward Jarrett, an American steeped in the lessons of Barnum, accompanied her. Her every appearance (whether shopping for drapes or standing on a beached whale) became news. A Philadelphia reporter blamed the actress, as well as her manager Henry Abbey, calling them the “great French Humbug” because they had sold her primarily on “unsubstantial newspaper notoriety” (quoted in Marks 2003: 170). One newspaper suggested, “Barnum himself could hardly be broader in his devices to draw a crowd” (Marks 2003: 70).

In spite of her status as a leading actress of her era, Bernhardt’s celebrity was inseparable from longstanding assumptions about the connection between actresses and whoredom. Who did not know of her lovers or her illegitimate child (or was it four children, as some newspapers claimed)? Not long after her arrival on her first American tour in 1880–1, a women’s committee in New Jersey met to consider “how to defend our country against this European *courtisane* who is coming over to corrupt our sons” (quoted in Marks 2003: 32). In spite of denunciation of her as an immoral influence, the crowds kept coming to her performances, and if they did so only out of curiosity, what did it matter what brought them to the theater? By the end of her first of many American tours, Bernhardt had made a fortune and her artistic reputation profited as well, since she had won over the majority of American critics who actually saw her acting (Marks 2003: 166–74).

As Diane Negra and Su Holmes suggest and Bernhardt’s career illustrates, female celebrity is often subjected to harsh judgment in ways that male celebrity is not (2011: 4–9). The presentation as well as the reception of celebrity often occurs in gender-differentiated ways that carry hierarchical values, with female sexuality assuming a large role in the inscription of women’s celebrity and interest in it. Bernhardt was taken to task for her publicity, her promiscuity, her thinness, her Jewishness, and only occasionally for her acting, but her celebrity also demonstrated the profit to be made in orchestrating controversy, a lesson that has been learned well by many contemporary celebrities, including Miley Cyrus, the former Disney Channel child “star” who turned “twerking” into a household word after her MTV Video Music Awards performance in 2013.

Whereas celebrities can be understood to function primarily as personalities that become commodified by various forms of communication media for the pleasurable consumption of the mass public, no matter what their relationship to specific venues of appearance (whether stage or screen, a royal court or the circus), the commercial instrumentality of celebrity is important. However, it should not be taken to be the

end point of interest as Wernick seems to advocate (1991: 106). Without a doubt, celebrity is subject to commercial trends that trade on it as a commodity to be sold and used to sell other products. In the 1880s, Lillie Langtry turned her status as royal mistress and “celebrity” beauty into a career as a stage actress. Anticipating endorsements of merchandise by movie stars, by the end of the nineteenth century her name and image were used to sell a variety of consumer products aimed at women: gowns, hats, cosmetics, and soap (Hindson 2011: 30–2). Using celebrity beauty to sell products aimed at women became ubiquitous in the twentieth century.

Understanding the complex and multifaceted significance of celebrity must be mediated by attention to its reception beyond the act of selling or buying. Reception should be seen as not merely a passive acceptance of celebrity’s commercial construction but as the potential site of unpredictable and complex responses involved in making meaning of social experience. It is a negotiation of sometimes contradictory, incomplete, or ignored intermedial discourses. In this respect, the history of celebrity is frequently inseparable from controversy focused on the subversion of social or sexual norms not just by celebrities but also by audiences – especially female audiences.

The idea that the gendered reception of celebrities, especially by women and girls, is unhealthy in its impact is a contemporary truism, one also attached to the careers of some charismatic celebrities who predated film and television. In fact, one interesting case is that of the violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840). In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, his mesmerizing impact on female audiences was highly controversial in an era that showed unusual tolerance for the excesses of the Romantic male as a Byronic antihero.

Paganini, known as “The Devil’s Violinist” for his musical virtuosity, was a cult figure who turned his concerts into displays of power, not just musical, but erotic – especially over women. Mai Kawabata characterizes Paganini’s violently physical performances as “quasi-pornographic ... inextricably linked to his rumored sexual insatiability” (2013: 71). He was reported to have quipped: “I am not handsome, but when women hear me play, they come crawling to my feet.” In response to a Paganini performance, Mary Shelley wrote to a friend: “he threw me into hysterics – I delight in him more than I can express” (quoted in Kawabata 73). Historically, women’s response to male celebrities – like Paganini and, later, another Italian-born celebrity, movie star Rudolph Valentino – frequently invokes tropes of hysteria and hyperbolic infatuation.

In keeping with the trope of female hysterical investment in celebrity, the untimely death of Rudolph Valentino at age 31 in August of 1926 led to a riot and two reported suicides. Newsreels captured the throngs – mainly but not exclusively women and girls – who waited in line by for hours to view the film star lying in state at Campbell’s Funeral Home in New York City. Police could not control the crowds: “Thousands in Riot at Valentino Bier” cried the front page of the *New York Times* (August 25, p. 1). By the time Valentino’s manager closed the proceedings early because of “disorder” and “lack of reverence,” an estimated 50,000 to 75,000 people had viewed Valentino’s body (*New York Times*, August 26, p. 1). Whether or not the public viewing was organized in hopes of actually creating a disturbance to draw attention to Valentino’s

last but not yet released film, *The Son of the Sheik*, is unclear – but the possibility cannot be set aside.

Like Bernhardt's celebrity, Valentino's stardom was marked by the ambivalent and often unflattering discursive construction of the star in the United States. Valentino's popularity was attributed there almost exclusively to females, and public discourse foregrounded male rejection of him in homophobic and racist terms. He was aligned both with the effeminate homosexual (who used a "Pink Powder Puff") and with the "tango pirate," the dark immigrant who erotically exploited American women (Studlar 1991: 24–6). But this construction of the star in the United States as an object of intense controversy and debate about proper gender behavior, sexuality, and ethnicity/race was not taken up in the same way in at least one other national context.

Jaakko Seppälä (2007) argues that in Finland, where the star was extremely popular, Valentino was constructed quite differently. He was talked about in Finnish film culture as a hard-working immigrant ... a fine, capable artist, and a gentleman of the finest quality"; moreover "it was acceptable for men to admire him." The apparent lack of transgressive social and sexual implications to Valentino's stardom in another national context serves as a reminder that it is important not to smooth over differences in celebrity's regimes of construction or reception. In this respect, it may be more appropriate to recognize multiple "cultures," rather than continuing to assert the singularity of celebrity "culture."

Celebrity and the Movies

The importance of movie stars to the systemization of twentieth-century celebrity is part of the normative view of the history of the phenomenon. It is generally recognized that Hollywood played an unprecedented role as an industry in solidifying the processes of marketing personalities as a mass attraction. The American film industry generated rules and values in a discourse of celebrity that dominated the first half of the twentieth century and seemed to prove the ultimate democratization of fame. To recalibrate the origins of early movie stardom in relationship to notions of celebrity is to suggest the power of discursive regulation in relation to industrial aims and public reception of mass media.

If the retrospective conclusion is that, with the arrival of the movies, celebrity found its perfect mechanism for producing a certain mode of "fame," one of the continuing mysteries of the American film industry remains: information about the lives of screen actors, indeed their very names, were withheld from the public until the second decade of production (around 1909–10). In this period, movies were sold through an emphasis on company branding (Bowser 1990: 104). The reasons for the film industry's resistance to the marketing of actors as identifiable and individualized commodities/personalities remain obscure. Most existing entertainments, including theater, dance, vaudeville, opera, concert stage, and Wild West shows, often focused on names, images, and "stars." Yet, moviemakers seemed uncertain about the value of reproducing celebrity as a central tenet in marketing their product in a highly competitive, fragmented, and quickly changing business.

However, those in the business who were actually observing audiences knew the power of faces made familiar by their repeated appearances on screen. As Eileen Bowser asserts: "The advertising value of players was very clear to all exhibitors by the end of 1911" (1990: 113). Confirming this, Epes Winthrop Sargent noted in *Moving Picture World* in October of 1911: "the [theater] manager can only avail himself of the advantages derived from the exploitation of personality since the situation has run away from him." A viewer wrote to *Motion Picture Story Magazine* (one of the earliest fan magazines): "As the Photoplay becomes a nightly habit, familiar faces on the screen must breed either respect, toleration or contempt" (October 1912). Actors emerged as a key means of marketing movies in response to viewer interest in those "familiar faces" who became "picture personalities," actors who owed their public recognition almost exclusively to their appearance in the movies.

In spite of pockets of producer resistance, starting in the 1910s, the industry consolidated its techniques of showmanship and applied them to actors. "Humbug" was evident in one of the first widely publicized incidents associated with this nascent phase of movie stardom. In 1910 the Independent Moving Pictures Company, or Imp, claimed that a rival film company had spread the "lie" that actress Florence Lawrence (figure 4.4) had been run over by a streetcar in St. Louis, Missouri. Of course, it was Imp head Carl Laemmle who planted the news item to publicize Lawrence's recent bolt from Biograph to his studio. After stoking the fires in the trades, he showed up in St. Louis with the actress in tow for an organized public appearance to prove that she was alive and well and "an Imp" (deCordova 1990: 2-3, 58-60; Bowser 1990: 79, 113). Although boldly Barnumesque, this was just one of many publicity efforts undertaken by film companies to promote actors who were of interest to the moviegoing public.

In other avenues for constructing celebrity, the industry moved cautiously. Initially, extratextual discourses did not seek to offer details about the private lives of those screen actors who became recognizable to audiences by their frequent film appearances. Richard deCordova claims: "The player's identity was restricted to the textuality of the films she or he was in. Even the articles that promised to reveal what the players were really like merely reproduced the representations of personality already produced in films. Differences between actor and character were to a large degree disavowed" (1990: 87). This approach to constructing a film celebrity was safe in the sense of avoiding prying into (or having to imaginatively create) the details of actor's lives, but problematic too.

To align or conflate the actor with textually constructed characters could lead to difficulties because of the industry's rapid schedule of production. A prodigious output of short films was needed to satisfy exhibitors in the era in which one- and two-reelers were the norm and programs needed to be changed often to keep audiences attending. In January 1912, in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Frank Woods cited the great need for "absolute ability and versatility" in the movie business where "the star is called on to appear in ... hundreds of roles - literally hundreds" (quoted in Bowser 1990: 108). Casting an actor in film roles that produced a consistent character type worked to promote a unified personality, the sense that the actor was more than his or her roles, but this strategy would not emerge securely across the industry



Figure 4.4 Florence Lawrence, a motion picture player promoted through humbug; studio portrait by Frank C. Bangs, ca. 1908 (Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, Film and Photo Archive)

until the mid-1910s as feature films became the standard and the construction of the “movie star” solidified both textually and extratextually.

Within the framework for producing film actors as celebrities in the early 1910s, visual promotion of actors in fan magazines often attempted to mediate between potentially conflicting demands: recognition of a “personality” and versatility of performance. Glamorized portraits provided the iconic anchoring of identity that Buffalo Bill and Bernhardt understood so well in shaping their own public images as celebrities. Yet, at the same time, visual presentation often called attention to the diversity of roles assumed by leading screen players. For example, “Gallery of picture players” in the December 1912 issue of *Motion Picture Story Magazine* presents Francis X. Bushman in large close-up portrait (staring into the camera). He is dressed in a suit, looking very confident in his handsomeness. This photo is surrounded by eight small images of the actor in character captured portraying men

of varied ages, classes, and races/ethnicities. The actor is virtually unrecognizable as "himself" in many of these insets since he is in heavy makeup, beards, etc. Similar photo layouts are offered in other issues of *Motion Picture Story Magazine* for other actors, including Kalem's Robert Vignola (November 1912), Vitagraph's Florence Turner (October 1912), and John Stepping (October 1912). The central photo used in all these layouts establishes the actor as a recognizable actor-celebrity. The glamorization of the star in a portrait shot suggests the celebrity status of the actor and his or her importance as a film player, one anchored with the name of the home studio below the layout. At the same time, depicting the actor in costume and in character in smaller figures draws attention to his or her on-screen versatility. This strategy of extra filmic presentation might remind fans of the enjoyment they experienced in seeing the actor in various roles and also encourage them to return to the movie theater as the primary source of pleasure in the construction of the star.

Already, by 1912, the term "star" was replacing "picture personality" as a term applied to leading film celebrities in magazines like *Motion Picture Story Magazine*, and the movies quickly learned to appeal to viewers as active "fan" participants in the process of constructing stars as a central lure to habitualized moviegoing. Numerous fan magazines created sections in which fans could have their letters, poems, or queries published, as with *Motion Picture Story Magazine*'s "Favorite Plays and Players by OUR READERS," inaugurated in 1912, and *Photoplay*'s "Bouquets and brickbats." Reader contributions often focused on individual actors, but the dominant theme of praise was mixed with criticism that targeted lapses in performances or the perceived miscasting of players. Venues for viewer response, as well as numerous contests sponsored by the growing coterie of fan magazines, encouraged the idea that film popularity was linked to the public in a democratic and, indeed, direct way beyond the anonymity of box-office receipts. Personal appearances by leading film actors at organized balls organized by exhibitors' associations encouraged the idea that the public had access to the film star beyond the confines of the screen (Bowser 1990: 117).

In the silent era, fan magazines came to inscribe their readers as women and girls. Souvenir photographic postcards of movie actors were offered for sale in the back pages of these magazines just as they were at movie theaters (Fuller 1996: 122). Soon well-known photoplay actresses were hawking cosmetics in fan magazines and other magazines aimed at women like *Ladies' World* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. Movie star Mary Pickford lent her face to advertisements for Pompeian Night Cream as early as 1916; for 25 cents, an appreciative fan could send away for a large, full-color panel of the advertisement to hang in her parlor.

Through such means, the discourse on film celebrity exceeded the limitations of the screen and brought the viewer into a different kind of relationship with the star. The US motion picture industry learned early that the lure of celebrity is especially potent when attached to the young, whether they are young celebrities or young fans. As Thomas H. Ince wrote in 1918, "The screen screams for youth. It clamors for the unlined face. It demands that middle age and maturity should stand aside when its stars are being made" (342).

Ince was speaking with the benefit of hindsight. Attempts to bring aging stage actors to the screen had enjoyed mixed success by 1918. Beyond her desire to use film as a record of her acting for future generations (Menefee 2003: 7), Sarah Bernhard's foray into the motion pictures proved to be extremely profitable, especially Adolph Zukor's 1912 US distribution of the feature *Les Amours de la Reine Élisabeth* or *Queen Elizabeth*. In spite of being based on Émile Moreau's unsuccessful play, the film was a huge success that encouraged American movie producers to hire famous stage stars to act in feature films. James K. Hackett, Mrs Fiske, and James O'Neill appeared in films based on their most famous theatrical roles. Janet Staiger claims that "in 1912 'stars' [of film] were the leading theatrical players, and audiences were certainly seeing them and knowing they were seeing them" (1991: 14), but dragging stage stars into the movies was a commercial strategy widely resisted by audiences who were not trained by urban theatergoing experience to appreciate these copiously advertised thespians, now reduced to dumb pantomime on the silent screen. The strategy was largely abandoned with Harry Aitken's spectacular failure at Triangle in 1915. He had hired a flock of famous (and expensive) Broadway actors to raise the quality of his films as well as the price of admission, but most of these "star" vehicles sank at the box office. Of the imports from the east coast, only Douglas Fairbanks and William S. Hart became major movie stars.

Although stage actors appealed as performers who could handle the rigors of sustaining characterization across the length of a feature film, changes in film technique made for closer camera positions that demanded a different, more natural style of acting than on the stage. These closer views – completely absent from a film like *Les Amours de la Reine Élisabeth* – also helped encourage an illusion of intimacy with the actor. As a commentator in *Moving Picture World* noted of a Griffith production in 1912: "Every change of expression is more clearly pictured than if they were truly before us. ... Is it not truly soul-music? Can such impressions be created in any other way than on the screen?" (quoted in Bowser 1990: 101). Both literally and figuratively, the movie actor became the center of viewer interest. By 1916, feature films were being constructed textually as star vehicles and that fact was being recognized. One reviewer commented in response to Fox's *Romeo and Juliet*, which off-cast film vamp Theda Bara as Juliet:

Theda Bara, of course, has an enormous following among the picture fans who will be interested in her Juliet, and the picture is put forward frankly to please them and without any great pretensions to artistic purpose. The whole film is highly flavored with Miss Bara ... [E]very artifice, such as "close ups" and holding Juliet in the conspicuous position of the picture to center attention upon her is employed to emphasize the star. (*Variety*, October 27, 1916: 28)

Cultivating intimacy with the actor in textual as well as extratextual terms, the American movie industry quickly aligned itself with the aspirations of young people who not only enjoyed the performances of cinematic celebrities but also used them as role models. A one-page editorial in *Motion Picture Magazine* in August 1919 is

indicative of how Hollywood's appeal to viewers included the lure of becoming part of an industry that redefined the very nature of success through "unprecedented visibility, power, and economic reward" (Orgeron 2008: 3). The editorial, entitled "The land of promise," is accompanied by a drawing of a classically robed, androgynous figure (a woman?) reaching toward a sunset that lights up the sky over open country, with a city in the far distance; the editorial proclaims: "Motion Pictures Are the Land of Promise. They are the artistic medium, the one land, where youth has found and kept a firm foot-hold. ... If your dreams are worthwhile, if your endeavor matches your ability to dream, the shadow art offers you a stepping stone to the altar of success."

Fan magazines suggested that Hollywood's model of celebrity success was democratic. It was not reserved for those of deep pockets, experience or education. It spoke to the young of all classes – as long as they were white. Fan magazines made the possibility of celebrity for women one of the driving themes of fan culture. If Clara Bow, a poor girl from Brooklyn, could submit her photo in a contest, win a trip to Hollywood, and become a star, why not other fans, other girls?

Conclusion

Although the practices that constitute celebrities in different eras may be historically specific, reliant on differences in technology, taste, and institutional apparatuses, the implementation of modern celebrity culture generally is regarded as inseparable from Hollywood. What Hollywood did was perfect the institutionalization of celebrity within a system that built upon the theatrical model of stardom but also rejected or modified aspects of it in order to enhance the value of actors in the marketing of motion pictures. As deCordova suggests, the nascent stages of constructing film stardom cultivated a family-centered discourse that reassured the public that movie actors led "healthy, conventional lives" (1990: 104–5). This emphasis (which is perpetuated by *People* magazine), coexisted with images of glamorous success. Whatever contradictions were created were absorbed and tolerated because the industry was greatly concerned with asserting its respectability as a guarantor of its place in the culture. We should not forget that many regarded motion pictures as low-brow or even dangerous to public morality. After all, in 1915, the unanimous decision of the US Supreme court in the case of *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio* denied motion pictures First Amendment protection because film was marked by "a capacity for evil." This ruling would not be overturned until 1952.

With the rise of stars like Theda Bara, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and Charles Chaplin, Hollywood became adept at producing celebrities who were "movie stars," known and appreciated by the public because of their film performances, not for their preexistent celebrity. However, as the public clamored to learn more about their screen idols, other media were used to sustain public interest in these celebrities' activities off-screen – in "private" lives that the industry felt compelled to construct in ways that improved upon the often notorious lives of stage stars – like Bernhardt.

The Hollywood star system operated within stable and specific boundaries but was not incapable of change in its requirements or accommodations, and it was not of a piece, with publicity departments, fan magazines, and newspapers placing different demands on the system and playing different roles in disseminating celebrity information. The demands and limits of Hollywood stardom provide a critical model for celebrity discourse, especially in its relationship to race, gender, ethnicity and age, as well as scandal. The relationship to scandal is often thought to have been transformed in the 1950s and early 1960s as the studio system disintegrated. Hollywood had worked carefully to either conceal or publicly interpret the underside of actors' lives in terms as favorable as possible to the actors to protect the reputation – and mass appeal – of motion pictures. The industry-controlled mechanisms that worked to construct star identity as a mainstream and marketable commodity were radically altered by the appearance of *Confidential* magazine (1952–78), and unashamed muckraking targeting the movie industry and selling the underside of actors' lives gained traction. Celebrity discourse moved into an era of scandalmongering.

It is clear that the question of whether the appeal of celebrity and its relationship to the actual experience of those who consume it changed radically in the wake of this mid-century shift in discursive practices is a crucial one. Has the actual production of the pleasures of cinematic celebrity changed radically? Are the sources of fascination actually different? Although individual celebrities and even film star identities may be produced through newer mechanisms (twitters and tweets instead of personal appearances and fan photos), is the systematic effectiveness of the construction and consumption of celebrity significantly different?

This raises the question of whether a celebrity can function as something more than a mere object of morbid curiosity and transient intermedial consumption, especially within contemporary consumer-driven culture. Could celebrity speak to more than the satisfaction of curiosity and envy, but also to the possibility of “the transcendental aspect of the icon” (Herwitz 2008: 133), the symbolic and quasi-spiritual dimension of reception that complicates celebrity's appearance of one-dimensionality? Chris Rojek's emphasis on the relationship between religion and celebrity as well as his claim that “post-God celebrity is now one of the mainstays of organizing recognition and belonging in a secular society” (2001: 58) point to the possibility of ecstatic emotional investment in the phenomenon of celebrity as an auratic experience. Supporting a reading of celebrity as potentially quasi-spiritual in impact, Christina Gledhill documents the many responses to Mary Pickford that suggest the transformational aspect of the star as a sacred object bound into a relationship of mutual love. In *Motion Picture Magazine* of May 1918, a fan wrote: “most of all we love Mary Pickford because she loves us. We know she loves us because she seems to love everything around her. Her pulse beats in unison with the whole world” (quoted in Gledhill 2011: 67).

In this description bespeaking adoration, Mary Pickford is the object of fan feeling that infuses the celebrity persona with transformational and salvational qualities. Such a star construction may seem the opposite of “female toxic celebrity,” explained by Sean Redmond as challenging all types of boundaries to represent “celebrity

carnival” and a “realm of excess” (2014: 123–5), but in spite of hedonist and debauched overtones in the mode of female celebrity Redmond describes, is not Lady Gaga also an anchor of solace and understanding to her fans in contemporary celebrity culture? Redmond quotes an appreciative letter from one of her “Little Monsters”: “Her music saved me ... Here is my thanks to you Gaga for helping me through your music it means the world to me and others out there” (quoted in Redmond 2014: 125). The notion of the auratic suggests that the lure of celebrity can break boundaries and inspire unexpected responses of emotional depth, loyalty, and transformation.

Often regarded as the ultimate “realm of excess,” Hollywood became the preeminent model for modern, post nineteenth-century celebrity, proving time and time again its ability to construct celebrity as an intermedial phenomenon that harnessed the power of visual and aural signification through numerous communication media or technologies. However, it must be remembered that celebrity and stardom are not synonymous. In the US film industry, stardom came to be narrowly defined. Its use was reserved for the actor whose films’ box-office performance merited his or her contractually determined billing as a “name above the title.” Thus, the star was the highest category of cinematic celebrity, and publicity to support this class of actors had a specific purpose: to sustain favorable public recognition of the actor in the interval between his or her appearances in films and to help sustain the actor’s popularity at the box office.

Other forms of celebrity anticipated the movie star, but these precursors lacked the ability to penetrate culture as pervasively as film. However, they often charted many of the same lines of interest and appeal to the public that would be exploited by the industrial imperative of the movies. What they could not do, as film celebrity did, was change the broadly held cultural norms of success – to name a set of values that took hold throughout society. The values established by film stardom are often seen as negative, representing alienation and commodity fetishism, but they did change the relationship of gender to celebrity, making female ambition visible and women’s independent pursuit of monetary success through work acceptable. Hollywood could manufacture celebrity and controversy in Barnumesque ways, but it could not manufacture complete conformity to its processes. It was confronted with an active fan culture with many points of entry, investment, and expression capable of registering interest beyond the box-office. In this respect, cinematic celebrity of the early twentieth century anticipates current forms of celebrity that, while temporally condensed and intermedially pervasive, still appear inherently uncertain – and occasionally mysterious – in impact.

Note

- 1 Fred Inglis’s history of celebrity shows a Carlyle-like resistance to the social importance of fashion. He states: “But they [clothes] cannot (do I have to say this?) do anything for the meaning of life. Maybe that is why the celebrities of fashion are such empty creatures ...” (2010: 246). Inglis is quick to pass over Brummell and make his claim for Lord Byron’s centrality to the origins of modern celebrity.

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Part Two

The Publics of Celebrity

Introduction

Sean Redmond

I exist but only if you notice me

The notion of the public in contemporary life has taken on a rich set of provocations and intersections. The pluralization of the term itself is an attempt to understand its multiplicities and complexities. To be public is to be out in the open, and with this visibility comes the sense both that one is being authentic and recognized, but also that at any moment in time one may be being outed or exposed. The public is never far away from publicity and revelation, and exists between the arcs of truth-telling and myth-making. To be seen in public means that you matter, have import and that you *actually* exist, but with that comes the risk of vaporization as the private self implodes in the obscenity of vision through which the veneer of the public is maintained.

Privacy and the private become an issue in an age where everything is seemingly put out in the open but where the dark spaces of closure and secrecy trouble the relentless flow of information and communication. The engines of the public draw one's attention away from the silent/silenced machinations of the private, as the WikiLeaks "scandal" shines a light on – although the charismatic figure of Julian Assange suggests that the cult of the personality is the conduit through which these public/private fractures take place. I exist but only if you notice me.

Contemporary publics are bathed in their own culture of narcissism, with the selfie one of the modes of expression that best encapsulates this self-love and the love for public expression. The relationship to celebrity culture is an important one since individuals take on public roles as if they are embodying celebrity values. As Chris Rojek observes, we "fall into a trap that celebrities have been experiencing for years, the split between the public and private self" (2001: 11). Further,

Celebrity status always implies a split between a private self and a public self ... The public presentation of self is always a staged activity, in which the human actor presents a "front" or "face" to others while keeping a significant portion of the self in reserve. For the celebrity, the split between the I and the Me is often disturbing. So much so, that celebrities frequently complain of identity confusion ... (2001: 11–12)

The public is both a performance space, and occupies the arena of marketing and promotions. We embody the politics of the public through famed and charismatic individuals, and we commodify it through its relationship to public relations and advertising. The public exists, then, in the gestures and pronouncements of famed individuals and in the vortex of publicity that surrounds them. In this respect, one can read and understand contemporary publics through the lens of the mega-spectacle whereby public life is made of star-studded promotional events (Kellner 2003). The spectacle of contemporary publics seduces us, offers us the logic of consumption and the neoliberal ideology of supreme individualism. Even the school fete now takes on the scale and form of a bejeweled affair, staged with dignitaries, and celebrities from the local area, and sponsorship from local companies and consorts. I exist but only if you notice me.

To be part of the public suggests commonality and group belonging, citizenship and active agency. To be denied access to such communities of engagement leaves one feeling isolated and alienated. Contemporary publics suggest open access for all but are, in practice, exclusionary and discriminatory. They mythologize equality but carry on the same level of limits as previous forms of democracy entailed. As Graeme Turner (2006) reminds us, contemporary public life is not necessarily any more democratic but is more closely connected to the demotic, that is, to access without power or empowering representation. Celebrity culture is centrally involved in producing the illusion of greater democratization but in fact masks the truth that power remains in the hands of the select few.

The geopolitical landscape plays a part in this question of access since minority states are often rendered marginal or peripheral to the grand staging of major events. Celebrities play a key role in the organization of the public in these interstitial global spaces, taking up causes, championing issues, joining forces with a range of public and state bodies to bring visibility to that which has been marginalized. The celebrity do-gooder or ambassador is central to this rainbow coalition since they make sacrifices on our behalf and call upon us to make sacrifices too, and to take up the response call (also see the chapters by Cooper, Nayar, and Tsaliki in Part Four of this Companion). Through them we feel actively connected to the public, to resistance politics, but we are also moved to take action ourselves. We enter the messy politics of contemporary publics through their images and representations, and believe that we will and can make a difference. Alternatively, and in contradiction to the reading just given, we may witness the gross orgy in which celebrity politics takes place and switch off, become disenfranchised, and exit the politics of the public world as a consequence. I exist but only if you notice me.

Contemporary publics take place largely in the landscape of the digital age and the networks of the social media. New online publics emerge, while traditional politics

and grass-roots activism gravitate toward this new locus of meaning and information transmission. The digital age has afforded contemporary life the opportunity to endlessly reproduce and represent itself so that the airwaves are full of public figures – so, so many public figures. **Micro-publics emerge, and with them micro-celebrities:** existing in contained electronic spaces if nonetheless available to all. This creates the appearance of its own niche of public life, with its own regulations and rhythms, but which ultimately sit within the wider fields of controlled and controlling political participation. **New forms of star and celebrity images emerge from such sites and processes,** not least the do-it-yourself celebrity who produces their own representational streams. The DIY celebrity perhaps best encapsulates contemporary public life: **they take the ordinary and make it extraordinary, they have a skill they are able to self-promote, or they develop a star image which people can lock onto, and which can be promoted. The DIY celebrity embodies the sense that the modern world is more democratic and open to all, even if in reality their own status is demotic – their access to the media center is limited and controlled and their power is measured in hits, likes, and views. They exist but only if you notice them.**

The four chapters contained in this section examine the publics of celebrity through complementary and yet discrete frames and fields. Turner and Couldry turn their attention directly to the question of democracy and access, working from and across the folds and flows of the contemporary political and cultural landscape. Kellner and Ishita draw on case studies to make critical sense of the publics of celebrity: Kellner examines the politics of spectacle in relation to Barack Obama, and Ishita explores public memory in relation to celebrity museums in Japan. Across the four chapters, the complexities and vexing issues that celebrities bring to public life, locally, nationally, and internationally, are explored and debated.

In “Celebrity, participation and the public,” **Graeme Turner explores two different if intersecting accounts of public celebrity.** First, he examines the emergence of the “ordinary” celebrity and their relationship to questions of democracy and participation. Here Turner reminds us of the **demotic potential of these celebrity figures** – in which they have access to democratic structures without the accompanying power – but he also explores the ways in which DIY celebrities produce their own “public” and what this constitutes in terms of connection and community. Second, Turner looks at what he thinks is the narrowing of definitions and processes of the public as a result of the rise of the digital media and micro-celebrities. He then explores the possibility that celebrity may take up quite contradictory positions in relation to the public sphere: “it is directly engaged in offering celebrity status to ordinary people through a range of mass media platforms and formats and is thus involved in **expanding the ordinary person’s opportunities for public visibility,** while at the same time participating in what might be seen as online media’s deployment of the tools of celebrity in a way that effectively retreats from the pursuit of “the public” in favor of the establishment of the ‘network.’”

In Nick Couldry’s “Celebrity, convergence, and the fate of media institutions,” he returns us to his central conceit of the **“myth of the mediated center”** in which media institutions self-perpetuate the idea that they grant people “privileged access-points to the supposed sites of societies’ ‘core’ normative values and explanatory

mechanisms.” However, in this chapter his focus is on the growing phenomenon of celebrity as the **focus of much of mediated life**. Couldry interprets that rise from the point of view “of institutional logics of survival, changing institutional and market networks, and the battle of media institutions in particular to shore up their social legitimacy and sources of economic value.” Recasting Bourdieu’s field theory to take into account the increased media saturation across all social domains, Couldry considers the reasons why the media need to rely on celebrity as a phenomenon particularly *now*, at a time when they are in crisis and “the myth of the mediated center is under threat, or at least requires intense efforts to be sustained in place.” Couldry argues that celebrity’s role in “helping sustain the myth of the mediated center links to its role in an emerging myth that is making sense of our actions in a world increasingly saturated by the use of social media platforms: the ‘myth of us.’”

In “Barack Obama, media spectacle, and celebrity politics,” Douglas Kellner begins by exploring the colossal reach of starstruck media spectacle in contemporary public life before he examines political celebrity and the celebritization of Barack Obama. Kellner develops a complex picture of **how celebrity spectacle infuses all aspects of public and private life, increasingly shaping and contaminating the political arena**. Spectacle is a technologically mediated event and involves “media constructs that are out of the ordinary and habitual daily routine which become popular media events which capture the attention of the media and the public.” For Kellner, **Obama is a master of the spectacle and a global celebrity of the highest order**. His overarching argument is that contemporary politics in the United States is informed by the logic of media spectacle and thus requires that candidates become visionaries of the spectacle. In conclusion, however, Kellner argues that Obama’s presidency so far also reveals the limits of celebrity politics and spectacle.

Saeko Ishita’s chapter, “Construction of the public memory of celebrities: celebrity museums in Japan,” explores the rise and significance of **the celebrity museum**, “dedicated to documenting and celebrating a famous figure whether dead or alive, fiction or real.” Ishita investigates the idea that the celebrity museum constitutes a new celebrity subindustry within Japan, something she notes takes place in relation to transformations brought on by the digital age. She frames her discussion around public memory, arguing that the celebrity museum is central to the way memories are forged and recalled, identities shaped, and the famed figure resurrected. In conclusion, Ishita considers the geopolitical aspects of the celebrity museum and how it will survive, or not, into the future.

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Celebrity, Participation, and the Public

Graeme Turner

In this chapter, I want to develop two different accounts of the relationship between celebrity and the public in order to recover some sense of the contingency of that relationship – and to argue that **some celebrity publics are more public than others.**

The first account will deal with what is now relatively well-established territory for celebrity studies: that is, the argument that contemporary modes of the production of celebrity have generated **new opportunities for the “ordinary person.”** The visibility of the ordinary person in the media has increased significantly since the rise of reality-based entertainment such as reality TV and the docu-soap, as well as the more recent development of so-called “DIY celebrity” enabled by the affordances of digital and mobile media. There is no doubt that the demographics of the public’s participation in the production of celebrity have widened although, as I have argued elsewhere (Turner 2006; 2010; 2013), this should be understood as a “demotic turn” rather than the effect of a process of democratization. The modes of participation have widened as well; not only do members of the public enjoy greater access to the traditional media platforms through which they might achieve celebrity and the personal validation that may signify, but there is now also the capacity to produce one’s own celebrity online – creating, in effect, a public of one’s own.

The second account, however, is aimed at reminding us that participation in these new platforms for the production and the consumption of celebrity is not necessarily aimed at, nor does it necessarily result in the creation of what we would normally regard as a public. The significance of social media and their networks, and the impact these have had on the development of DIY celebrity outside the mainstream media systems, may have resulted in a narrowing of the concept of the public¹ in relation to the production of certain forms of celebrity. Much of what we might assume to be among the properties of the conventional celebrity – such as its mass-mediated character and the simple scale of its visibility – do not figure among the attributes of the activities of the many bloggers who establish their DIY online presence with

a small group of followers. In fact, a great deal of what occurs as a result of this particular mode of participation does so within quite limited networks of circulation; according to P. David Marshall (2006; 2010), for instance, much of it is concerned with the presentation of the “persona” in question within that limited community rather than engaging in a more conventionally public form of widely distributed and mass-mediated representation. The emergence of what has been described as the “micro-celebrity” (Senft 2008) suggests that there is a question of scale, as well as a question about the character of the “public” being constructed, to be addressed in our understanding of what we consider to be a celebrity today.

Furthermore, although this is only now becoming an issue to be debated within celebrity studies, such questions are not confined to celebrity culture alone; they are enclosed within emerging patterns and trends that reflect the significant ways in which the function of the media, in general, is now changing. As media audiences fragment, as media organizations target niche rather than mass audiences, and as media consumers are increasingly personalizing their media diet, there are concerns about the likely social and cultural effects of such a highly customized mode of consumption. While there has been debate about the social consequences of such trends in relation to the consumption of news and information – for instance, about the “balkanization” of the national community into fractions organized around their chosen media content (Sunstein 2009) – the consumption of celebrity is implicated too. There are now several studies (Couldry and Markham 2007; Inthorn and Street 2011) which contribute to this wider debate by raising the possibility that the consumption of celebrity may actively encourage a disengagement from a broader notion of the public. These studies have demonstrated an empirical connection between high levels of the consumption of celebrity and a lack of engagement with public issues such as those connected to formal politics.

This chapter, then, explores the possibility that celebrity may play quite contradictory roles on the varying levels at which it operates: it is directly engaged in offering celebrity status to ordinary people through a range of mass media platforms and formats and is thus involved in expanding the ordinary person’s opportunities for public visibility, while at the same time it participates in what might be seen as online media’s deployment of the tools of celebrity in a way that effectively retreats from the pursuit of “the public” in favor of the establishment of the “network.”

Accessing Celebrity

Among the established orthodoxies on the contemporary condition of celebrity is celebrity’s migration from being an unattainable, magical condition only available to the few, into something that has now expanded sufficiently, in the frequency of its occurrence and in its demographics of participation, to suggest to many that its achievement might realistically be included among the normal expectations of an ordinary person’s everyday life (Bonner 2011). This is reflected in what can only be described as the gradual normalization of the desire for celebrity that we see in many

locations today – from the Anglophone West to the modernizing nation-states in Asia. Interestingly, however, while this might suggest that the condition of celebrity has lost some of its magical exclusivity, it has not made the achievement of celebrity any less random or arbitrary. The contemporary condition of celebrity, still and in fact almost definitively, refuses the direct relation between personal achievement or entitlement that was recognized through earlier formations of public visibility, such as that of “fame” (Braudy 1986). While there is considerable, in fact increasing, debate about the historical roots of celebrity – for some it is a direct consequence of the development of the mass media in the early twentieth century (Schickel 2000), for others its origins are located in the emerging public sphere of the eighteenth-century London coffeehouse (Inglis 2010) – there is a relatively standard explanation of what constitutes the difference between earlier formations of “fame” and contemporary “celebrity.” Within this explanation, fame is the consequence of the public awareness of significant personal achievements – those of the soldier-hero, the political leader, the eminent cleric and so on – whereas celebrity is the consequence of a public visibility which may or may not have arisen as a result of significant personal achievement (Rojek 2001; Turner 2013). Contemporary mass media celebrity in particular can be based on almost nothing other than the fortuitous (or canny) achievement of visibility itself, as is proposed via Daniel Boorstin’s often quoted aphorism: the celebrity is “well-known for being well-known” (1971).

The production of celebrity is not, of course, quite so arbitrary in practice. Usually, public visibility is the direct outcome of media work which is aimed at marketing a commercial venture that makes use of, or in some cases establishes, a particular celebrity. The most familiar and longstanding versions of this media work include the use of established media stars to promote a line of cosmetics or a particular fashion house, or well-known sports stars using their public profile to endorse sports products or other kinds of merchandise. The more recent formation of celebrity, however, also includes the public visibility of individuals whose prominence is the industrial by-product of the strategies used to promote the media and entertainment vehicle which carries them – typically, reality television formats. They enter the program as unknowns, but leave as extremely “well-known” – if only for a brief period. This, in turn, is recognized as constituting a significant shift in the structure of the media industries; many sections of the media have gone from *using* celebrity to *producing* it. So, rather than simply employing a celebrity who has achieved their visibility elsewhere as a promotional device, television in particular has discovered how they can cut out the middle man and use their own programming to make their own celebrities from whole cloth. Reality TV formats, in particular, have become a celebrity production line, building on the widespread, often daily, exposure they provide through the use of live streaming and chat rooms as well as a number of other participatory and interactive strategies intended to maximize viewers’ engagement with the individuals on the screen.

It is important to acknowledge here that the above account does lean toward those assessments of contemporary celebrity that adopt a similar line to that taken in my own work (Turner 2013; 2010) on the demotic turn – that is, acknowledging the wider distribution of celebrity while nonetheless resisting the idea that this enhanced

access has necessarily carried with it an enhanced degree of power or control for the individual concerned or the consumer in general. Much of the more recent work on reality TV has tended to adopt a healthily skeptical account of the format as a zone of empowerment (Skeggs and Wood 2012); after all, it would be uncontroversial to point out that reality TV is just as likely to humiliate and embarrass its participants. Nonetheless, the steady demand from potential participants also indicates how desirable an appearance on television has become; to be represented at all, it seems, constitutes a mode of personal validation. As one writer has suggested, the more mundane the representation, the less it involves special talents or qualities, and the more it is simply about depicting you, as you are, the more of a validation it seems to be (Braudy 1986: 7). Those who take this more positive view of the politics framing the emergence of the reality TV celebrity point to the often reported sense of personal affirmation as evidence that this form of achieved visibility does indeed have benefits for the individuals concerned.

John Hartley has been one of the more influential writers to take such a positive view of this phenomenon; he has also been quick to discern the positive potential in the new affordances of the digital era (1999; 2008; 2009). Hartley's development of the notion of the "DIY celebrity" was one of the earliest formulations to recognize that the production of celebrity had migrated to new locations in the digital era. Responding to discussions of the early webcam presences such as Jennicam, Hartley argued that the capacity to produce such identities was a sign of the ordinary person's reclamation of control not only over the production of celebrity but also over the construction of their own identities. (The enthusiasm for the webcam, of course, has largely gone now – its novelty was rendered obsolete by the smartphone and the tablet, while the core locations for user-generated content have migrated into the world of the video aggregators such as YouTube.) Hartley's account emphasizes the fact that DIY celebrity can be constructed without the mediation of the traditional gatekeepers and indeed without any direct engagement with the mainstream media industry at all. Furthermore, he argued, this constituted a dramatic break with a past in which the means of media production and distribution were the exclusive property of the established media industries. In an argument echoed much later by Jay Rosen's manifesto on behalf of the "people formerly described as the audience" (2006), Hartley pointed out that the affordances of the digital era meant that ordinary people no longer merely consumed what was offered to them; they could produce their own content and distribute it themselves.

While these remain live debates in numerous contexts about the politics of "ordinary celebrity," and I will return to them in a moment, there is not much argument about the fact that ordinary people are far more prominent actors in the contemporary media than they were several decades ago. To some extent, this might be explained as a response to market demand. The market may not have known that it was thirsty for celebrity content but once it was provided it had a dramatic effect. Celebrity content rescued the mass market women's magazines in the 1980s, manufactured groups such as the Spice Girls rescued the music industry in the 1990s, and the celebrity incubator of reality TV was among the factors which rescued television in the 2000s and underpins its economy in the present. The rise of the ordinary

celebrity, however, is really only significantly connected to the last of these developments. The recruitment of attractive but not necessarily talented persons into popular music stardom has long been a commercial strategy for the music industry, and so this can't be seen as anything like a new idea in that context. The development of television celebrities as by-products of reality TV, however, was new. Furthermore, the promotional avenues available for maximizing the connection between these celebrities and their audience had changed with the digital era, offering more immediate modes of interactivity and engagement. And while some of the reality formats offered a form of public visibility that was explicitly connected to the promise of a career in the entertainment industry – the talent contests such as the *Idol* and *Got Talent* franchises – there were many more which simply represented the ordinary person going about their everyday lives (admittedly, in front of the cameras!). The celebrity gained by participants in these more mundane formats was largely a result of the fact of their appearance on television but was no less desirable, it seems, for its likely brevity and ephemerality. As a result, it is probably true (although I know of no research that actually establishes the evidence for this) that in certain locations such as the United States, the range of class, racial, and ethnic identities represented on television has expanded – even if the manner in which such identities are treated in particular cases may well be just as recuperative, patronizing or objectifying as was the case in earlier periods when they were less commonly represented (Skeggs and Wood 2012). Notwithstanding, and as also noted earlier, this widening of access has been applauded by Hartley and others as constituting a form of “democratization,” a fundamental reshaping of the power relations between the media and their audiences. Changing patterns of inclusion and participation are thus seen to be delivering a form of political empowerment to those who make use of them.

There is now a considerable body of work which argues against this notion, or at least suggests the need for a more cautious and instantiated account of the effect of the widening of media access identified with the ordinary celebrity. Earlier on, at the point where the webcam girls were being offered as a key example of online empowerment, both Nick Couldry (2003: 129) and I expressed significant reservations about the extent to which a certain degree of control over the generation of content (but not, in fact, its distribution) did indeed render the DIY celebrity free of the constraints of the established industry structures. The close links I noted in 2004 (in the first edition of *Understanding Celebrity*) between the webcam girl sites and porn site providers is only one of the many reminders that while the ordinary person might indeed have acquired the capacity to perform their celebrity online, that is actually quite a long way from being able to operate completely outside the existing industrial and economic structures (see now Turner 2013).

It is also important to recognize that there is more to this than access; we need also to see how much power is enjoyed by those who gain access to mass media platforms such as those used to produce reality TV. A number of researchers have noted (Andrejevic 2004; Collins 2008) that the stars of reality TV, when compared to the stars of dramatic series for instance, are especially powerless in their relation to the program producers. Indeed, this is essential to the operation of the format. Participants such as the *Big Brother* housemates need to be easily replaceable as

each successive series has to generate its own cohort of high profile performers. Accordingly, the housemates tend to be tied to contracts which limit their promotional opportunities to those arranged around marketing the program (rather than themselves); it is not surprising then that the percentage who have the opportunity to go on to leverage their short-term visibility into either power or a career is miniscule. As I have written elsewhere, the logics of the production of reality TV necessitate the “achieved celebrity of each individual” being structurally “subordinated to the needs of the particular program or format” (Turner 2010: 15). Rather than the empowerment of ordinary people, therefore, the celebrity generated by reality TV is more accurately described as their commodification. This should not surprise us, of course; as I have noted:

No amount of public participation in game shows, reality TV or DIY celebrity websites will alter the fact that, overall, the media industries still remain in control of the symbolic economy, and they still strive to operate this economy in the service of their own interests. Overwhelmingly now ... these interests are commercial. It is this fact alone which should give us pause in suggesting they might also be democratic, simply because they have multiplied the range of choices available to the consumer. (Turner 2010: 16)

The other issue which has divided opinion here is the proposition that the enhanced media access everyone agrees has occurred advances a democratic politics. In my own contributions to this debate (i.e., 2006; 2010; 2013), I have protested that such a proposition overlooks the fact that there is no automatic equivalence between more egalitarian patterns of access and a democratic politics, and wrongly assumes that the mode of participation we are describing necessarily translates into the kinds of political empowerment that would constitute a form of democratization. While there is this possibility, of course, it is not an “intrinsic pattern common to all media in all situations”:

While John Hartley can usefully employ a neologism such as “democrataintment” as a means of specifying a form of media participation where “DIY” entertainment serves democratic purposes, Sun and Zhao (2009: 100) have their own neologism (“indoctrainment”) to describe the use of entertainment as a means of reinforcing the moral and political values of the state, specifically, in the People’s Republic of China. (2010: 170)

The “indoctrainment” Sun and Zhao refer to here is also largely that of reality TV and talent shows.

As I go on to say, it is also true that these current shifts in the media include a rise in opinion as media content, which on the one hand contributes to the narrative of an expansion in participation but, on the other hand and in practice, has played a significant part in the construction of new kinds of media elites (Hindman 2009) – some of whom definitely do not operate as a democratizing force within the current political environment (and the line-up of Fox News commentators is only one of many examples of this).

All of that said, however we view the recent shifts these arguments set out to understand, it certainly seems that the promise of celebrity is regarded, by the public, as more freely offered than ever before, and it has thus entered the expectations of everyday life in ways that might not have occurred previously. There are now numerous instances of research that reports on (usually) teenage subjects nominating “being famous” as a career objective, without first considering how that fame might be achieved (Lumby 2006). Furthermore, now that celebrity appears no longer to be entirely controlled by the media industry gatekeepers, but can also be constructed in a DIY fashion online, such a possibility has gained added plausibility. Not only that, but the nature of the development of social media, including the kinds of discourses used to organize its interactions, has also collaborated with the growing sense that an ordinary person is able to participate freely and productively in celebrity culture. Friends’ postings are reported as “news” items on Facebook, and the online extensiveness of the label of “friend” or “follower” seems deliberately to take us into territory that is close to that of the fan, and of para-social relationships.

Online celebrity has certainly changed things significantly. Since the days of Jenni-cam, the opportunities for all kinds of DIY celebrity have multiplied and diversified – creating Senft’s “micro-celebrity”: a “new style of online performance that involves people in ‘amping up’ their popularity over the Web using technologies like video, blogs, and social networking sites” (2008: 25). Marwick and boyd’s (2011) account of the growth of the micro-celebrity notes how it has mirrored the practices of mainstream celebrities. They are referring here to the changes in the promotional practices of the mainstream media and entertainment industries consequent upon the take-up of social networking tools such as Twitter. In many locations, today, having a Twitter account has become essential for anyone working in the media, in entertainment or in politics – indeed in any industry that will benefit from the active management of a public presence. Celebrities not only have their own official websites through which their fans can interact by posting comments, questions and the like, but now they also have a range of social media through which they can, if they wish, respond directly to their fans in real time. In many cases, of course, it is the publicist or some other employee who actually writes the tweets and engages in the interaction (Tom Cruise owns up to this practice), but there are also many celebrities who do write their own tweets (Ashton Kutcher is one of the more notorious). They describe their day, they post photographs, they respond directly to fans’ questions, and they converse among themselves – celebrity to celebrity – in full view of their followers. Theoretically, if not always in practice, followers on Twitter have the opportunity of participating in a real-time unmediated exchange with their favorite celebrity.

We might once have described the celebrity/fan relation in terms of its parasociality (Turner 2013; Rojek 2001; 2012) – that is, it had many of the attributes of a normal social relation with the exception of direct personal contact. Social media come very close to providing that direct contact through online interaction, and that must change our view of what now constitutes the celebrity/fan relation in the present conjuncture. Indeed, there is some indication that even the celebrity has an interest in this, more authentic because unmediated, engagement with their

fans – and some appear to actually embrace the fact that it can escape the control of their publicist and their management. There are certain celebrities who are renowned for breaking cover in this environment and tweeting personal information and opinions without much regard for the professional consequences (weirdly, media mogul Rupert Murdoch turns out to be among the nuttier examples of this practice).

Online celebrity is about the gathering of a following. For the industry celebrity, the basis for this following is ready-made once they are established (that is, it has already been articulated to various media vehicles such as movies, television programs, media interviews and so on or it has already been connected to promotional and publicity activities such as endorsements). It is there to be mobilized as part of their management of themselves as a “celebrity-commodity” (Marshall 1997; Turner et al. 2000). For the micro-celebrity embarking on the construction of a DIY public persona from scratch, the task begins with enlisting friends as followers and using *their* social networks as a means of extending the initial reach of this public persona. In an interesting blurring of the distinctions between production and consumption, the ordinary person who pursues micro-celebrity ends up using the same tools as those whose celebrity is already established, and which they have likely used in their role as consumers of celebrity. As James Bennett has put it, not only has the desire to be famous become “increasingly ordinary,” but so have many of “the tools with which to become famous” (2011: 179): the use of personal websites, blogs, and social media. Just like the more traditional celebrity, the micro-celebrity engages in a form of self-branding through the performance of their persona online: as Marwick and boyd describe it, “micro-celebrity involves viewing friends or followers as a fan base; acknowledging popularity as a goal; managing the fan base by using a variety of affiliative techniques; and constructing an image of the self that can be easily consumed by others” (2011: 141). The process is understood by those engaged in it as a form of personal self-fashioning as well as an activity of self-promotion: the publicness of the presentation of the self is regarded as an especially productive component at a personal level. Those who have interviewed reality TV participants for their research (Andrejevic 2004) report that their informants describe the public display or performance of the self via these mechanisms as an intrinsically valuable and empowering form of self-expression.

Customized Consumption, Public Engagement and Celebrity

What is outlined above, then, is a particular story about how, in some of its domains of activity, what remains the elite and hierarchical practice of celebrity has mutated toward the development of new, more expansive and inclusive modes of interaction with and participation by the public. These new modes of participation have the effect of blurring the distinctions between (or perhaps, more accurately, dissolving the binaries between) production and consumption, the celebrity and the fan, and the traditional celebrity and the “ordinary” or micro-celebrity. Not only is this a story about the extension of the public purchase of celebrity, but it is also a story about the ways in which celebrity’s discursive penetration into modes of self-fashioning

have changed its previously established modes of intervening in the social. While we might, and do, argue about precisely what might be the political ramifications of this, there seems no doubt that an intervention of this character and scale must have political significance. The second story I want to tell, then, engenders a slightly different set of concerns but they are no less political in their potential ramifications.

This involves more than just the function of celebrity. Its context is the broader discussion about the function of the media in an era when centralized media systems such as national broadcasters can no longer be taken for granted, when models such as the “appointment-based viewing” that once organized the consumption of television are now being challenged by other practices (binge-viewing, time-shifting, and the like), and when the massive proliferation of choice that is being experienced in most locations today, together with their development of niche, preference-based audiences, has undermined easy assumptions that the media necessarily serve a function of constructing a common culture for national communities, or of providing citizens with the necessary information for the effective functioning of a democracy. It might seem a little unnecessary to point this out, but the traditional conceptions of the function of the mass media were based on the expectation that the media addressed a mass audience. Subscription television systems do not actually do that, although they do at least compete in the mass media marketplace for their subscribers. Including social media within the field of mass media, however – something that is routinely done – troubles such an expectation much more substantially; potentially, activity on social media is both interpersonal and private, both mass-mediated and public. The expansion of the domain of celebrity into social media entangles it within these contradictions – contradictions that problematize the very concept of a mass media audience.

Much of the debate within media and cultural studies about this new configuration of the mass media has been engaged with assessing its effect on the provision of news and information. Triggered, to an extent, by the so-called “crisis in journalism” around alternative news sources on the one hand, and the declining authority of journalism on the other hand, there is concern about the development of an audience that takes its definitions of the world from news outlets that do not have to earn and maintain the trust and respect of a mass audience. Niche-oriented news media serve niche politics. The accelerating partisanship of the US electronic news media as they seek out such audiences has played a part in generating concerns about the dangers of a thoroughly fragmented mediascape comprised of numerous outlets speaking only to their own audiences. Mark Andrejevic, making use of Cass Sunstein’s (2009) work, puts it this way:

As consumers choose to cut through the commercial media clutter by selecting information and media outlets that reflect their political persuasions and preferences, catering to them by reinforcing both a particular understanding of the world and an impassioned reaction to the day’s events, audiences run the danger of insulating themselves from information and perspectives that might change their own. The result, Sunstein argues, is the prospect of a greater divergence of opinion rather than an information-driven consensus. (2011: 605)

While a diversity of opinion has always been one of the desiderata in a liberal version of the media, it had been originally assumed that this diversity would be embedded in consumers' media diet through its inclusion, indeed its unavoidability, within the limited menu of choices available, typically via the broadcasting schedule. The digital era no longer demands such limitations on the number of choices available and it is now possible for the consumers' media diet to be composed of many selections based on a very restricted set of preferences. Andrejevic endorses the fears expressed in Sunstein's prediction of the media's "balkanization," its fracturing into ever more extremely differentiated groups that "will continue to move further apart as the media content they consume becomes increasingly concentrated around their preferences – be they for particular genres of entertainment or a specific political agenda" (Andrejevic 2011: 605). While those who conflate market choice with democratic empowerment are unlikely to share these concerns, there are examples of state regulatory intervention aimed at maintaining at least some semblance of the earlier model of the mass media market – subsidies for newspapers, for instance, in France and Sweden, as a means of resisting the market pressures noted above and maintaining media outlets that still address the bulk of the population by providing a platform for engagement with a full range of issues of broad public concern.

It is this latter issue I want to turn to next. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, there is evidence that the consumption of celebrity, notwithstanding its pervasiveness, may well turn out to be one of those activities which direct audiences toward taste-related niches and away from the larger agenda of the mass media. At the level of production, of course, as we have already seen, the use of social media for the construction of celebrity has this effect as well. This is different, I should add, from regarding the consumption of celebrity simply as representing a lower level of engagement in news and public issues. That is not the issue at hand here. Rather, I am interested here in reporting on work which suggests that consumers' close engagement with celebrity may indeed work in precisely the way that Sunstein fears; where it is the primary component of a media diet, the evidence suggests, a high level of interest in celebrity may well have the reverse effect to democratization: that is, it may actively militate against the kind of public political engagement that the concept of democratization would imply.

As part of a large empirical project aimed at examining the relationship between media consumption and what they describe as "public connection," Nick Couldry, Sonia Livingstone and Tim Markham found that there was reason to examine, specifically, the part played by celebrity in this relation. The project set out to test the assumption that "most people share an orientation to a public world where matters of common concern are addressed" (effectively, this is their working definition of "public connection"). It did this by mapping the connection between what they determined was such an orientation and particular patterns of media consumption. Specifically, in relation to celebrity, the project considered how "celebrity culture in a broader sense (as it intersects with the growth of 'reality TV,' fashion culture, and other areas of today's media culture) offers connections to a wider world of public and political issues, even if one very different from party politics" (Couldry and Markham 2007: 404–5). The participants' diaries generated "data on media consumption,

attitudes to media and politics, and public actions, and also the contexts in which all of these occur" (406). The telephone survey which followed asked participants "which of the following things, if any, do you generally follow or keep up to date with?": and the list of 18 possibilities included traditional political issues, single issue political issues (such as the environment), and some "broader themes in the public eye (including *Big Brother*, celebrity gossip, music, fashion)" (411). From this emerged a "celebrity cluster" of participants who were distinctive in that "as well as the headline news of the day they kept up with the latest celebrity gossip, fashion, the music charts, and reality television" (413). While the analysis of this group is more detailed than I can go into here, the research concluded that the cluster of their subjects who were most interested in consuming celebrity were also the least likely to be politically engaged (even more than those who professed to have *no* interest in public issues) (418). Interestingly, this was not a reflection of a lack of exposure to news but rather a "lack of engagement with news, in parallel with the lack of local and political engagement," which includes not only community involvement but also the likelihood of their voting in an election:

[these results] tell us something important about what features are likely to be associated with a primary interest in celebrity culture. Respondents in this cluster are the least likely to vote, and their political interest is low, as is their social efficacy. They spend an average amount of time with the media in general and the news in particular, although their disposable leisure time is the lowest (again, perhaps because of the predominance of women). What makes them distinctive is their low news engagement, a lack of engagement that is mirrored in the local and political arenas; seen positively, they prioritize "keeping up to date with" celebrity and popular culture over both traditional or alternative public issues. (417)

Couldry and Markham make the point that this is what they describe as a "positive choice"; that is, it seems to be a deliberate "turning away from concern with issues that require public resolution (away from, in our definition, 'public connection')" (418). While notable in its own right, this is strong evidence against the assumption of democratization and a reminder to those of us in media and cultural studies that "popular culture is not always the bridge to an effective and expanded democracy that we would like it to be" (419).

I want to connect these findings back to the description I provided earlier of the manner in which online celebrity, or the micro-celebrity, has developed through engagement with social media. The exploration of the potential of the network might be seen, in this context, as constituting a positive choice of its own – a retreat not only from the "mass" in mass media but also from the definitively "public" dimension of the public persona. There is still much to be done in carefully differentiating the domain of the social media network from the domain of the mass media – not just in relation to celebrity but in general. Daniel Dayan, in his discussion of the decline of "televisions of the center" (central national broadcasting systems), insists that the more traditional versions of the mass media carried out quite different functions to those fulfilled by new media. Dayan argues that new media gather a formation of

the audience that is very different from the “whole galaxies of audiences that form national publics.” Notwithstanding the capacity for sharing, that might in one sense seem to extend the horizon of new media’s public, Dayan claims these media actually involve “relatively narrow publics”:

What is shown on the new media is not truly public. Rather than displaying an authoritative status that once belonged to royal historiographers, images shown on new media tend to circulate among personal networks without ever being ascertained by a gate-keeping institution. Travelling within the periphery, short-circuiting centers, they tend to function like rumor. (2009: 24)

Rumor, of course, is not only a neat fit with so much of the material circulated via social media as well as through the online alternative sources of news, but it also enjoys a close fit with the mass-mediated discourses through which celebrity is articulated, mined, traded, and consumed.

The core issue here, however, is not so much about the content or the status of the content carried via new media, but rather about scale: what is the scale of visibility required for its subject to count as a celebrity or, to ask it another way, how large must a following be to count as a public? If we go back to one of the earlier attempts to set up a taxonomy of celebrity – the taxonomy which remains the most useful, in my view – Chris Rojek’s *Celebrity* makes a distinction between celebrity and renown that is largely about the scale of the pattern of circulation and about the nature of the public that such a pattern generates:

Renown ... refers to the informal attribution of distinction on an individual within a given social network. Thus, in every social group certain individuals stand out by virtue of their wit, beauty, courage, prowess, achievements or grace. Renown, you might say, depends on reciprocal personal or direct para-social contact. These individuals have a sort of localized fame within the particular social assemblage of which they are a part. In contrast, the fame of the celebrity is ubiquitous. (Rojek 2001:12)

For both Dayan and Rojek, the “localized” character of the network is set up as, in a sense, the opposing term to the ubiquity generated by a wider public. This implied opposition between the network and the public may provide a means of thinking about the difference between the online micro-celebrity and the mass-mediated celebrity. The paradox that underpins all this, of course, is that the narrowing conception of the public consumption of celebrity that enables the emergence of the micro-celebrity runs directly against the grain of the expansion of participation in the production of celebrity that shapes the account of the dominant trend within mainstream celebrity culture – of which the micro-celebrity is nonetheless a part. The widening of access to the means of production and distribution has played a part in generating a mode of celebrity that actually aims at a more narrow and restricted conception of a public.

What this alerts us to, in my view, is the fact that celebrity – as a cultural formation – is mutating as it moves into territory that is more restricted than before. In

order to think more productively about this, and rather than persisting with the category of the micro-celebrity any longer, it is useful instead to pick up Matt Hills's notion of the subcultural celebrity because that label directs us very clearly to the cultural contexts within which this form of celebrity circulates. That is, rather than describing this more restricted mode of celebrity through the technologies which enable its circulation, as has so often occurred, the label of the subcultural celebrity focuses our attention on the cultural function of this form of celebrity. Hills is useful, too, in insisting that the increasing prevalence of subcultural celebrity – his primary reference points come from within fan cultures – demands closer attention to how it actually works. He contests, for instance, Rojek's distinction between renown and celebrity, by pointing out that the subcultural celebrity, just like the mass media celebrity, can also attract nonreciprocal recognition – “the subcultural celebrity is known to a far wider circle of fan-consumers than he or she in turn socially knows” (Hills 2006: 104). Consequently, Hills suggests that the way in which celebrity studies uses the concept of celebrity needs to be more responsive to the changing dynamics of the patterns of production and consumption:

Rather than holding on to a singular conceptual version of “celebrity,” contemporary audiences – not to mention scholars – may thus need to ever more reflexively distinguish between different levels, types and taxonomies of celebrity, ranging from the media industry's various mass-mediated products through to audience-constructed and perhaps more subcultural celebrity personae. (2006: 102)

Hills works through some of this by examining the hierarchies made or assumed in the distinction between regular celebrities and subcultural celebrities such as those he describes as “Big Fans.” In relation to the Big Fans, he argues that while “fan culture sustains its own specific network of cultural celebrities ... [certain] fans can succeed in niche-mediating their names and iconic likenesses, acquiring restricted celebrity status” (2006: 115). These individuals then cross over into the mainstream as their names and likeness begin to circulate in mass media publicity texts. Hills suggests that we need to acknowledge an even greater pervasiveness as well as a greater degree of contingency as the discourses of celebrity invade all kinds of cultural sites, moving far beyond “the domains which have been classically associated with such discourses.” “[C]elebrity culture,” he goes on to say, “is no longer entirely coterminous with the production and consumption of mass-mediated ‘star’ texts and intertexts” (2006: 116).

Conclusion

What is particularly useful about the work being done on these new zones of production and consumption of celebrity is that it demonstrates the proliferation of levels and hierarchies of celebrity; thinking these through involves a closer attention to issues of scale, to the regimes of circulation, and a greater acknowledgment of the emerging differences between networks and mass media publics. There is a danger,

of course, of the category of celebrity expanding, much as its performance has done, to the extent that it means everything, and thus nothing. Marwick and boyd provide a means of dealing with this danger, I think, by making the important observation, in their discussion of online celebrities, that the capacity to “perform celebrity” online, while not inconsiderable, is still significantly different from actually “being” a celebrity. These are not simply differences of scale or degree. A Big Fan in one of Hills’s subcultural networks will experience celebrity in an entirely different way to Angelina Jolie or Bono: they are not recognized wherever they go, they are not photographed incessantly, whatever interest there is in their private life is so restricted as to be more or less manageable, and the effect of any potential embarrassment or gaffe is so limited as to offer not much more discomfort than the embarrassments of an ordinary person’s everyday life. As Rojek has rightly argued, it is the ubiquity, the inescapable pervasiveness of contemporary celebrity which is among its most definitive attributes. We need to hang on to the distinction that Marwick and boyd recover: while the tools of celebrity are certainly now widespread and available for use in production, and while the access to the mass media machinery of celebrity has expanded, the experience of celebrity – specifically, its excessive publicness and its ubiquity – remains one that is still only accessed by a small proportion of the population. Those “ordinary people” who have successfully and usually temporarily appropriated the discourses of celebrity for their own self-representation may have got a taste of it, but it is a long way from constituting the conditions of their everyday lives.

Note

- 1 I am not using “the public” in a particularly specialized way here; rather, my use is consistent with the generally post-Habermasian manner in which the term has been deployed within media and cultural studies in recent years, as a broadly inclusive, primarily mass-mediated constituency or audience.

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Celebrity, Convergence, and the Fate of Media Institutions

Nick Couldry

Wherever we live, we are probably now familiar with stories about celebrities and their social function, whether as role models for young people, or as leaders of public debate, or as new actors who can redeem trust in a discredited political system. Such stories often bring with them claims that the phenomenon we call “celebrity” compensates for failings elsewhere in the functioning of the social system, and perhaps even that celebrities represent “us,” “the people.” This chapter will turn firmly away from such narratives; in their place, it will offer an account of the wider social and media industry forces that have generated the phenomenon of celebrity, taking those forces seriously from the perspective of social theory – that is, our theories of how societies are structured as social domains – but rejecting any notion that societies and their media “function” seamlessly like a well-oiled machine.¹ That notion of “society” is itself mythical, and masks a more complex and open-ended field of struggle that sometimes seems to be focused within the boundaries of the nation-state, at least if seen within the perspective of a “methodological nationalism” (Beck 2000). In fact, the dynamics of celebrity are not limited to national borders, although celebrity often takes local forms too. All of those dynamics need to be reinterpreted from this point of view, if the connections between celebrity analysis and social theory (Marshall 1997) are to be developed.

To do this, this chapter reads celebrity as part of the related “myth of the mediated center” which for some decades has come to make sense of our investments in media institutions by depicting them as privileged access-points to the supposed sites of societies’ “core” normative values and explanatory mechanisms (Couldry 2003b). This *deconstructive* account of celebrity will focus not on the intrinsic specialness of particular celebrated individuals or on the social function that celebrity narratives might play in relation to particular social or political struggles, but rather on the growing phenomenon of celebrity culture itself: that is, the seemingly inexorable rise of celebrity narratives and celebrity-focused attention. I will interpret that rise

from the point of view of institutional logics of survival, changing institutional and market networks, and the battle of media institutions in particular to shore up their social legitimacy and sources of economic value.

The analysis will fall into two parts. The first part, on celebrity and mediatization, will see celebrity as part of a wider shift in the relations between fields (in the sense defined by the late Pierre Bourdieu) that occurs in social domains saturated for a long time by media flows and media-related practices: this first part of the chapter will involve us in some consideration of the significant revisions to Bourdieu's field theory that are required to take account of media saturation. The second part (on celebrity as attention trap) will, against the background of the first part's social-theoretic analysis, consider the specific reasons why media industries need to rely on celebrity as a phenomenon particularly *now*, at a time when, for deep economic, technological and cultural reasons, the myth of the mediated center is under threat, or at least requires intense efforts to be sustained in place. Here celebrity's role in helping sustain the myth of the mediated center links to its role in an emerging myth that is making sense of our actions in a world increasingly saturated by the use of social media platforms: the "myth of us" (Couldry 2015).

Celebrity and Mediatization

How then can we situate the growth of celebrity as a phenomenon in many countries, and indeed globally within social theory? The starting-point has to be to recognize that celebrity is a phenomenon of the media industries. Celebrity as a general phenomenon (as opposed to mere fame or reputation, which is a feature of all human societies whatever their scale) is characteristic of societies in which media industries are highly salient, because they exercise near-monopolies of symbolic power (Couldry 2003b).

By "symbolic power" here I mean two related things. First, a descriptive sense that refers to a distinctive mode in which power can operate, through symbols. John Thompson defines "symbolic power" thus as "the capacity to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others, and indeed to create events, by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms" (1995: 17). As a basic definition, this remains useful. But we also need to bear in mind a second, stronger sense of the term "symbolic power" that refers to the cumulative force of symbolic power (understood in the first basic sense) when it becomes particularly concentrated in certain institutions over time. Under those conditions, such institutions dominate the whole social landscape, and their symbolic power comes to seem so natural that it gets misrecognized. In such circumstances, we can talk of symbolic power as a power "of constructing reality" (Bourdieu 1991: 166). In societies characterized by symbolic power in this second sense (which is always derivative of, rather than replacing symbolic power in the first sense), life is not just saturated by media contents and media-related practices; it is increasingly oriented toward those contents and practices, reinforcing the wider symbolic power of media institutions.

This phenomenon can be seen as part of the broader process of mediatization. Mediatization is the term for the *structural shifts* associated with the increasing involvement of media in all spheres of life. Through mediatization, as one of its leading theorists Friedrich Krotz puts it, “media in the long run increasingly become relevant for the social construction of everyday life, society, and culture as a whole” (2009: 24). On this approach, mediatization is an umbrella concept that refers, as Krotz puts it, to a “metaprocess” that can encompass *many different* types of process across different sites. Mediatization occurs when media become an irreducible dimension of *all* social processes and their interrelations. The “celebritization” of society (Driessens 2013a) is one aspect of this larger metaprocess. But if celebritization is informally defined as the increasing rise of celebrity as a reference point in society, how exactly might we explain *this*? Here we need to take a detour through field theory and its limits.

Updating field theory for the age of media saturation

One of Pierre Bourdieu’s great and enduring contributions was to insist that we cannot analyze sociological processes without first relating them to what goes on in specific fields of practice where particular forms of capital are at stake: no *general* space of the social exists per se. The importance of this insight is reflected in the wide adoption of field theory in social and cultural analysis.

Bourdieu’s field concept is a highly sophisticated response to the processes of *differentiation* in late modernity. Bourdieu’s definition of a field was not rigid, and he readily acknowledged that the term “field” is designed to capture emergent phenomena and should only be used if it helps us grasp the actual order in what people do (not everything works as a field). What we cannot do, however, is talk about the social as if the deep differentiation of social space in modernity, and especially late modernity, had not taken place.² As yet, a detailed field theory account of, say, the relations between general journalism and the processes we might want to gather together under the label of a general “celebrity” (or perhaps “promotional”) subfield has not been written, but it might be an interesting project to develop.

Here I will be concerned more with thinking in general terms about how the *transversal* effects of media – that is, linked effects that occur simultaneously at all or very many points in social space simultaneously – can be understood within field theory. This is the route whereby the analysis of celebrity (surely a transversal effect, if ever there was one!) can itself be integrated within social theory by way of field theory. An initial problem is that field theory does not give us the tools to make sense of such transversal effects, precisely because it urges us always to look at the dynamics within specific fields. How can this problem be overcome?

Bourdieu himself, in his early work on symbolic power (collected as Bourdieu 1991) which was completed some time before he developed his field theory, gave great emphasis to the role of symbolic institutions in shaping belief right across

social space as a whole. Bourdieu's concern then was with religious institutions, not media. In an early essay he suggests that some accumulated concentrations of symbolic power become so great that they come to dominate the whole social landscape; as a result, they seem natural and get misrecognized, their underlying arbitrariness becoming difficult to see. In this way, symbolic power moves from being a merely local power (the power to construct this statement, or make that work of art) to being a general power, the "power of constructing reality" discussed earlier. Understood this way, symbolic power plays a deep definitional role in social life. Two decades later Bourdieu recalled this when in his notorious short book on media and journalism he made some controversial claims about television's effects: "one thing leads to another, and, ultimately television, which claims to record reality, creates it instead. We are getting closer and closer to the point where the social world is primarily described – and in a sense prescribed – by television" (1998: 22).

How such polemical – but intriguing – claims could be understood to work consistently with field theory remained unclear. How exactly do representations made by actors in *one* field come to have such influence on the actions and thoughts of those in *another* field? Can the general effects of media across social space be understood in terms of the aggregation of such interfield effects, or do they need to be understood as a cross-field effect of a completely different sort? This is a problem with which detailed work within field theory has struggled (see Couldry 2012: ch. 6 for a more detailed discussion). Suppose we try and explain the impact of celebrity by arguing that there is such a thing as "media capital" that is available to work in every specific field. Within the explanatory mechanisms of field theory, this quickly runs into trouble. *Either* media capital is a new basic form of capital like economic capital that applies anywhere (which seems a rather drastic claim). *Or* we see it as a specific form of capital that emerges within specific fields only – but where then exactly is media capital acquired and exercised? In the media field or in the (political, medical, academic, etc.) field where the agent in question primarily acts in ways that get media attention? Yet, if every field had its own type of media capital, we would have to explain how they all interrelated, and doing that would still leave us short of explaining how something like "celebrity" works to generate influence in parallel ways across many different fields at once.

The underlying problem is that field theory was born out of an account of social differentiation developed *long before* the transversal operations of media's representational and categorizing power became such a dominant feature of social space: celebrityization was not an issue that Bourdieu had to consider in his classic work on fields. Yet such transversal effects cannot be ignored, and Bourdieu (in his late work on media) began to recognize this. Field theory's differentiated model of social space does not provide any obvious way of registering what some educational sociologists have called "cross-field effects" (Lingard et al. 2005). But it was exactly such cross-field effects of media flows on social action that a phenomenon like celebrity culture exemplifies. So how can we adjust field theory in such a way that it can help us make sense of this?

An important clue to squaring this circle comes from Bourdieu's late work on the state. Bourdieu inherits and extends Weber's notion of the state, conceiving it as a monopoly of not just legitimate physical but also legitimate *symbolic* violence (Bourdieu 1996; Weber 1947). This generates a fascinating question: What is the nature of the resulting power that the state exercises over the rest of social space, that is, over *all* fields and space simultaneously? In his book *La Noblesse d'État* (in English, *The State Nobility*) Bourdieu was interested in how the state achieves and exercises dominant influence over social definitions, for example, definitions of legal and educational status (1996: 40–5): clearly this influence works not in one field only, but across *all* fields via what Bourdieu calls “the field of power.” The concept of the field of power is rather undeveloped in Bourdieu. Formally, the field of power is the space above and beyond specific fields where the forces that vie for influence over the interrelations *between* fields operate: the state is the main focus of the field of power, but perhaps not the only one. This field of power is arguably *not* best understood as a “field” in Bourdieu's normal sense, that is, a bounded space of competition over specific forms of capital conducted by particular actors; rather it is a *general space* where the state exercises influence over the terms on which specific fields interrelate, and so, indirectly, over the dynamics of all particular social spaces that operate as fields. As Bourdieu puts it, the state is “the site of struggles, whose stake is the setting of the rules that govern the different social games (fields) and in particular, the rules of reproduction of those games” (1996: 265). Put another way, the state has influence over what might be called the “exchange rate” between the types of capital at stake in each individual field (for example, over the relations between economic and cultural capital, or over the nature of symbolic capital or reputation, within specific fields). Bourdieu calls this influence “metacapital” (see Wacquant 1993). This metacapital of the state is, crucially, not derived from the workings of any specific field, but *works across them*.

What if media institutions have an influence over the operations of particular fields that is similar in type to the influence Bourdieu attributes to the state? What if this conceptual move could also help us understand the effects of celebrity in so many domains at once? Could indeed the pervasive influence of media institutions more generally be conceived along these lines? This too would be a form of “meta-capital” through which *media* exercise power over other forms of power. It would operate only at the macro-institutional level (the level of metaprocess, or “mediatization” in Krotz's sense), and so would be quite distinct from, although linked to, media-related capital at work through individuals' actions in specific fields (compare Davis and Seymour 2010). Indeed there would be a relation between the two: the greater media institutions' metacapital across all social space, the more salient media-related capital would be for action in any particular field; this would not be a general logic, but always worked through the particular dynamics of those fields. Media then would be understood – but still within the terms of field theory – as transforming the bases of everyday social action through transforming what counts as resources for action, and particularly as legitimate bases for recognition, within particular settings.

Celebrity culture understood from the perspective of field theory

Could celebrity “culture” be understood as part of the wider operations of media metacapital? It is in fact quite easy to think of more concrete examples that would illustrate this.

When the media intensively cover an area of life (cooking, business, gardening, and so on), they alter the internal workings of those subfields and so widen the valence of media metacapital *across* the social terrain. A simple example from the United Kingdom would be the rise of television gardener Alan Titchmarsh. He became a well-known television personality through his own gardening show: this of course reinforced his status within the gardening subfield (his television show was on prime time slots), but it did more, since the popularity of his personality grew more generally. At a certain point in this development in the early 2000s, he became well known enough to be able to launch a career as a novelist and to have considerable success. Clearly this later development was nothing to do with any capital he had acquired within the literary or broader publishing field and derived only from his wide visibility as a television personality (Bennett 2011) of a certain trustworthy, friendly sort. Clearly also his gardening celebrity did not guarantee the success of his novels as novels: they could have flopped. But what we need to explain is how such a move *between* fields became conceivable, even possible, in principle.

No doubt many more similar examples could be developed of cross-field expansion by well-known celebrities. Such examples help us understand one way in which the operations of celebrity start to become *a culture*: that is, a taken-for-granted web of connections that can be drawn upon by all sorts of actors within promotional culture (Wernick 1990). Can this sort of transformation be expressed more precisely within the terms of field theory? To do so, it is worth a further excursus into the slightly technical language of field theory, in the process completing my claim that celebrity analysis can be fully integrated into social theory more widely.

This involves three moves. The first is to confirm the idea just suggested that media institutions in contemporary societies have a “metacapital” (media metacapital) *somewhat* parallel to the metacapital of the state: that is, an influence over the terms of operation of all fields in social space (see Couldry 2003aa for a more detailed argument proposing this idea). In that earlier argument, I talked about media metacapital principally in terms of influence over what counts as symbolic capital (or reputation) in particular fields, but this is in fact only one way in which media metacapital might work. Another is through the general visibility (and therefore availability as a reference point) that celebrity status guarantees for certain individuals: media metacapital in this respect would contribute to our broader understanding of the sociology of visibility (Brighenti 2007).

Olivier Driessens’s interesting recent work (this is the second move) builds on this idea and argues that a consequence of media metacapital is the emergence of “celebrity capital” (2013b) as an asset within particular fields which can be put to use by actors in that field. So publishers in the literary field (or at least the commercial end of it) could put to use Titchmarsh’s general capital as a highly visible celebrity

who is generally liked and trusted to launch (one might say “brand”) a series of novels of a mainstream sort for wide distribution.

There remain however some theoretical issues to be worked through (the third and still uncompleted move). How does “celebrity capital” which works in particular fields relate to the other types of media-related capital (Couldry 2012: 139) which are in play in that field? Driessens rightly points out that while media metacapital and celebrity capital both involve the use of symbols, and the latter derives from the operations of the former, they work at different levels: media metacapital across all fields (2013b), celebrity capital within particular fields. Celebrity culture, as he points out however, does not guarantee a positive outcome for the symbolic capital (or reputation) of the celebrity in a particular field. So the economic effectiveness of Titchmarsh as a novelist is separate from his literary reputation as a novelist, which is probably quite limited. Meanwhile, the celebrity capital put to use in a particular field which derives from a person’s wide visibility is different from the specific *media-related skills* which a different person might have built up in the same field, helping them rise to prominence in that field, although of course they are related. Bono’s celebrity capital, originally derived from the music field, enabled him to be active in the political field, where he interacts with politicians, some of whom may be able to demonstrate not just their political capital, but their skill as politicians who are good at performing in media: indeed interacting with someone like Bono (a general celebrity) may contribute to the growth of their media-related capital in the political field, since of course politicians now need to be good media performers.

There is, in other words, a complex interrelation which still has to be fully theorized between media metacapital, the celebrity capital which derives from it (and which can be put to use in particular fields) and the more specific media-related capital that relates to skills that amplify media performances by actors in that specific field. All are forms of capital that involve symbols, and so all are linked to the symbolic power of media institutions, but equally all are distinct from, and not necessarily associated with, positive reputation (in Bourdieu’s term “symbolic capital”) in specific fields (Driessens 2013b). Academics, for example, can be denigrated by their peers for their excessive focus on media skills; indeed Bourdieu’s book (1998) on media makes just such a judgment about “mere” academic celebrities.

Celebrity as Attention Trap

So far I have just explored how, within the terms of social theory – particularly a version of field theory updated for media-saturated societies – we might *model* the way celebrity works, and the types of power that celebrities come to have in particular fields. This offers us a diagram (an abstract model of forces and influences) of how celebrity works, interconnectedly, across social space. But it falls short of describing and explaining the particular dynamics that might be intensifying the phenomenon of celebrity in the era of digital media in particular societies. I address this in the second part of the chapter.

I will not try to summarize here all the useful histories of celebrity as a social and cultural phenomenon that have been written (see especially Marshall 1997; 2006; Rojek 2001; Holmes and Redmond 2006; Bennett 2011). The precise dynamics of celebrity culture in any particular location *must* derive, in part, from the particular histories of how celebrities were built, constructed and interpreted in those locations; these in turn *must* be connected, first, with the structure of that country's "media system" (Hallin and Mancini 2004); second, with the relations (dominant or dominated) of that media system with the wider system of global media flows; and third, the broader institutional relations (between media industries and market, state, religious and political forces) that affect the *weight* that media phenomena have within social processes at such locations. None of what follows is meant to deny such local complexity.

However, it is useful, I will argue, to abstract from those local forces some cross-cutting reasons why we would expect celebrity to be rising in every media system affected by the rise of digital media, and it is these cross-cutting dynamics that I want to explore. Those dynamics relate, in particular, to the fate in the digital age of what I have called "the myth of the mediated center" (Couldry 2003b; 2009).

Celebrity and the challenges to the mediated center

Our understandings of the contemporary phenomenon of celebrity must be put in a context of much wider transformation in the media industries. One aspect of that transformation can be expressed by saying that not just the "what" but the "who" of media is changing. This complicates what John Thompson once called mass communications' "fundamental break between the producer and the consumer" (1990: 15): the rise of social media is just of this transformation.

Today the internet gives individuals, not just institutions, a capacity to reach large audiences. Specialist media producers/distributors are concerned to invest not just to produce their own content, but to stimulate and manage "user-generated content." Meanwhile media consumers or audience members have endless opportunities to contribute to or comment upon institutional media production. Some celebrate the interpretative communities that are emerging around newspaper websites, while others are more skeptical. Some see under way more fundamental shifts: the web's shift from "a publishing medium" to a "communication medium" (Manovich 2008: 43). Will this lead to the disaggregation of media outputs, the *withering away* of "the mass media"? Or is this to underestimate the need of today's new media corporations (such as Google) to *sustain* a quality media environment across which it can make its profits?

The leading *commercial* media players are arguably today not program makers, news agencies, or film companies, but Google (including YouTube, which it owns), Facebook and Apple. These institutions have become important because they make and sell the devices, platforms and search engines on which media interfaces rely: it is those players who *link up* the many streams of media usage into practical "wholes." As Tarleton Gillespie notes (2010), "platform" is a much-used term within industry

circles to capture this linking capacity. Yet not everything is changing. Take television: in the early 2000s it was commonplace to proclaim the “end of television.” Undoubtedly the nature of television is now different: no longer a box in the corner of the living-room, television has become a collection of various screens; television is no longer primarily a “push” medium available in just one form (broadcast or distributed by cable or satellite to a television set) but rather “a matrix medium” that offers in connection with other digital media platforms and contents “an increasingly flexible and dynamic mode of communication” (Curtin 2009: 13). William Uricchio (2009: 63) puts it well when he says, television may now be returning to the “pluriformity” that characterized television in the days before the mass television audience.

Clearly then we cannot grasp our expanding media environment by thinking of how new media (the internet?) substitute for old media (television? radio?). Instead, we must think about media transformations operating across the whole panoply of media through completely *new types of dynamics*, including the following:

- 1 the massive growth in online content delivery networks for both top-down distribution and horizontal exchange of photos, film, television, and music;
- 2 social networking sites such as Facebook as a new interface for linking to any of the above, or simply for contacting our friends and mobilizing our supporters;
- 3 many-to-many interfaces for continuous broadcasting in time and space such as Twitter;
- 4 media applications (“apps”) for many sorts of mobile phones, tablets and other mobile devices.

We now experience a *media manifold* that comprises a complex web of delivery platforms: sustaining this manifold is the effectively infinite reserve of the internet. The media manifold is something readily imagined, even if actual access to it varies from person to person. It is the linked *configuration* of media that is crucial, and it is in terms of our changing relations to this manifold that, in a guise very different from the productions of “stars” by specific industries such as Hollywood, celebrity is sustained as a significant social and industry form.

Particularly important in this vast media domain are new modes of simplifying what we have to pay attention to. Philip Napoli (2008: 60) discerns the growing “massification” of the internet whereby most online activity converges around rather fewer sites than we would at first expect. Iconic new devices, such as the iPhone, simplify our interface with the media manifold. More broadly, our media practice changes only because media technologies within everyday contexts mesh with our wider habits, our ways of “getting by.” The power of phone apps is their capacity to reconfigure our basic habits of interacting with media. Under these conditions, the economic dynamics of media are themselves transformed.

There are many economic transformations going on and some are not relevant to my argument, for example the sharp downward turn in advertising for newspapers in most countries linked to the changing configuration online of the information bundle that once was a “newspaper.” There are however deeper factors reconfiguring

the economics of *every* media sector, not just the press. The increasing unknowability of the media audience in the digital age is a challenge for those trying to buy its attention, that is, the advertisers who have always been a driving force in the media environment (Smythe 1977). What if, through the convergence of once separate media, people's trajectories across the media landscape become so varied that neither producers nor advertisers can assume a pattern any more? Joseph Turow's pioneering work (2007; 2011) on the audience-selling process and advertising industry has shown that advertising's changing practical construction of "the audience" has begun to have profound impacts on how media content industries think of *their* audience. Advertisers focus now on the targeted search for individual high-value consumers, to be reached not through specific media packages (TV programs or newspaper pages in which advertising can be placed) but via continuous online tracking which targets them *individually and continuously*, as they move around online. Will this new concept of marketing erode the idea of a general audience and with it media producers' sense of responsibility for a shared public world? Certainly nontarget audiences are of declining value to media institutions, while the differential value of niche audiences matters much more. Potentially, the shift of advertising budgets toward buying individually targeted advertising, data mining, and content sellers who offer further opportunities for better data mining, undermines the subsidy for mass media that mass advertising has for a century or more provided (Turow 2011). The consequences are only just beginning to be grasped (Couldry and Turow 2014).

And yet for a while at least we can expect that the tastes of individual consumers, even the most wealthy, as they move across the potentially infinite space of online content, need to be grounded in some wider web of belief. It is on celebrity's role within this changing web of significance that the understanding of celebrity's contemporary significance needs to concentrate. This takes us back, as did my original analysis of the myth of the mediated center, to media's role as social institutions.

What if the very idea of "*the media*" is imploding, as the interfaces we have for over a century called "media" are transformed? It is important to remember that the disruptive dynamics are *not* technological per se: the internet is distinguished, in part, by its ability to link up previously separate contexts (think of YouTube), a feature which arguably makes it *easier*, not harder, to sustain "the media" as a common reference point. And, in spite of all the centrifugal forces, basic consumer demand for fashion, music and sport, if it is to be sustained at all, requires "the media" to provide *common* reference points toward which we turn to see what's going on, what's cool. Indeed media corporations need, perhaps increasingly, to create those "watercooler moments" that can drive individual users to follow content across platforms and generate income. If so, Graeme Turner (2010) is right to argue that the decline of mass media is not the same as a decline of media institutions' "centrality." In the multiple-outlet digital media era, "centrality" becomes an even more important claim for media institutions to make, as they seek to justify the wider "value" they provide. The ability to speak for, and link audiences to the "mediated center" becomes all the more important, even as its reference points in social and political reality become more tenuous.

How should we think about the role social media play in all this (“social media” being the biggest shift in media over the past decade)? It is a mistake here to see social media platforms as the sites of some alternative and authentic “social” which will develop *against and separate from* the interests and dynamics of media institutions. The intensity of feedback loops on social networking services (SNS) makes them particularly well suited to create a “buzz” around both niche and general products, feeding back into mainstream media. SNS may not come to focus an alternative “center”; rather the parallel centripetal processes of SNS and mainstream media may become increasingly intertwined like the strands of a double helix. Many institutions have a close interest in the development of this double helix: political institutions for example which must seek new “spaces of appearances” where they can address their population, and of course traditional media institutions themselves. There are good reasons to believe that the workings of this double helix will favor not formal politics, but “entertainment,” fitting Douglas Kellner’s wider claim that “entertainment is shaping every domain of life from the Internet to politics” (2003: 12). The dominance of entertainment (a less costly investment than investigative journalism) suits the bottom line economics of weak media institutions, and it also helps us understand why celebrity is becoming more prominent in politics today.

Meanwhile, the new interests that have invested directly (or as advertisers indirectly) in social media are encouraging a new myth: what we might call the “myth of us.” By this I mean the new myth which is emerging about the types of collectivity we form when we use social networking platforms: *a myth of natural collectivity* whose paradigmatic form lies in how we gather on platforms such as Facebook. This myth is particularly seductive because, on this story, old-style media institutions seem to drop out altogether from the picture of “what’s happening.” This myth offers a story focused entirely on what “we” do when, as humans like to, we keep in touch with each other. This myth is not as yet fully established: just as the myth of the mediated center took decades to become fully established, so the myth of “us” is likely only to stabilize fully over time. José Van Dijck brings out the complexity of the norms that are currently *competing* among the proprietary models of this “platformed sociality” (2013: 5). In addition, the two myths continue to overlap, and we can expect that it is through their interrelations that the future of media institutions will be defined.

Celebrity as social default setting

In thinking about the changing role which celebrities, as a general phenomenon, play in today’s societies, within the wider deconstructive social-theoretic account offered in this chapter, we have to confront three overlapping transformations.

First, and already described in the first part of the chapter, there is the growth, through the wider phenomenon of media metacapital, of linkages across multiple fields of competition, creating the sense in countries such as the United States and United Kingdom of a composite phenomenon that we casually call “celebrity culture” (I am well aware that such a “culture” is not so strong in many other countries, and the difference here needs to be approached not as a primary phenomenon of

expressive culture, but as the resultant of different structural features of the various media systems and institutional matrices involved: compare Hannerz 1992 for a structural understanding of the “complexity of culture”).

Second, and cutting across the first trend, are the various threats to the practical dominance and symbolic or social legitimacy of media institutions: as we saw in the last section, there are many interrelated forces at work here, operating in different directions, on different time-scales and through different dynamics, and so producing no simple overall result. Nonetheless, it is clear that, in the digital era, for overdetermined reasons, media institutions need to work harder to claim their centrality to audiences’ attention. In the era of digital convergence, it is not media content but focused audience attention that is scarce.

Third, and partly in reaction to some the forces within the second trend, there is a huge shift under way (Turow 2011) in the basic model of how business advertises through media to its markets, and so the extent to which advertising generates subsidies for media content. As marketing increasingly becomes configured less around large-scale media productions and more around continuous granular surveillance of high-value individuals, a deep gap opens up between media institutions’ representational rhetoric (of speaking to and for “whole” populations) and the everyday reality of individuals-under-continuous-surveillance through which economic value (for advertisers and for media content producers) is generated. We are starting to see signs of this gap in books that question the social costs of the shift of everyday interaction onto online “social media” platforms (Van Dijck 2013; Meijas 2013). Since there is no reason to suppose that celebrity, as an institutionally produced phenomenon, will disappear, even if the “stars of the silver screen” have become a distant memory, how can we think about celebrity within these complex transformations?

I want to suggest three dynamics as likely to become prominent: celebrity as grammar, celebrity as promotional role-model, and celebrity as rebel. I will discuss each in turn.

As media institutions’ claim to be socially and practically central in our lives becomes harder to sustain in a world where media are sourced from many directions, including us and our friends, the importance of celebrity as a basic “grammar” of media production increases, not decreases. We have known for some time that large-scale media, such as television corporations, faced with falling prime-time audiences, have increasingly needed the prop of “events” to stimulate audience loyalty and to generate temporary peaks of attention; in that sense the “media event” has become banal (Dayan 2010). For the same reason, celebrity as a reliable structure for sustaining attention is also becoming banal, that is, even more necessary to media industries’ basic survival. Helpfully, the sites for producing celebrity have diversified, with the apparently democratizing growth of reality TV and YouTube creating new ways whereby celebrities can emerge and, at least briefly, be validated. Celebrities too are necessary components of event narratives. In this respect, nothing is new, because celebrity has been used as a device for sustaining audience attention since the start of Hollywood. But the continuous and overlapping promotion cycles of particular media industries (film, music, sport, news) and the expansion of what we might call “promotional space” (the range of platforms across which the

promotion of celebrities can now take place, with Facebook and Twitter now being basic platforms for this purpose) together increase the scale and scope of the way in which the basic *grammar of celebrity* can be played out. Since it is reasonable to suppose that the stock of exceptional human beings does not change much (subject only to short-term blips in investment in specific sectors such as sport, themselves linked to media events such as a home-hosted Olympics), it is reasonable also to assume that the link between celebrity status and exceptional accomplishment becomes, on average, ever more tenuous.

This tension in (or “weightlessness” of) celebrity culture links with the second dynamics which is that celebrities, or would-be celebrities, and their promoters, need to be ever more active in securing or sustaining their celebrity status, and digital media platforms fortunately provide ever more channels for doing so. Celebrities become ever more energetic in self-promotion and, in this sense, ever better *role models*, not for particular moral qualities, but *for the culture of self-promotion itself*. Those with small followings on Twitter, because of the promotional logic built into the platform, cannot help but follow the role model of celebrity tweeters as they try, in micro, to generate larger followings or raise their Twitter profile. In this sense, the norms and banal habits of self-promotion that used to be an individual specialism have become basic norms of everyday life, confirming Andrew Wernick’s remarkably prescient argument (back in 1990) that we were heading toward promotional *culture*. Celebrities in the process acquire a symbiotic relationship with new digital platforms, without there ever needing to be a commercial agreement in place; the relationship between celebrity and the infrastructure through which they promote themselves and are increasingly promoted, becomes apparently “organic,” natural, a reflection of what we all “naturally” do. This is another form taken by the myth of us in a “culture of connectivity” (Van Dijck 2013). Some go one step further and see the unstoppable inflation of celebrity as part of something larger, the growth of “communicative capitalism” (Dean 2010; compare 2002: ch. 4), but, while there is force to this as a reading of what matters about celebrity (its basic “ideology of publicity”: Dean 2002: 114), this may exaggerate the degree to which the complex forces at work here all resolve in one direction, the reproduction of capitalism.

This takes us to a third, and perhaps surprising, dynamics: *celebrity as rebel*. Suppose it is right to say that we are now seeing the combination of persistent media institutions targeted at large populations (remember that current models of democracy need something like the “mediated center” to sustain a space of appearances for governments) and ever more relentless tracking of individuals in their everyday life *qua* individuals and regardless of their membership of any collectivity. This is the coming conflict to which Joseph Turow’s pathbreaking work on the new dynamics of advertising alerts us (Turow 2011). If so, then the combined social/economic system that drives both phenomena is, in a sense, in bad faith: its collectivities are increasingly, and inevitably, false, and the relations of individuals to the abstract power they imply are increasingly, and intractably, relations of suspicion and mistrust. The whole computer-network-based infrastructure of everyday life is, as legal scholar Julie Cohen notes (2012 188), from one angle pure authoritarianism, that is, a complex living necessity to which we have no choice but to submit and be compliant.

If so, celebrities, in line with earlier incarnations of rebel film or music or literature celebrities, come to play a new role as spokespersons for the intolerability of such contradictions. The massive attention paid in Britain in autumn 2013 to comedian Russell Brand, following his interview with the BBC television news program *Newsnight*, where he attacked the emptiness of formal democratic politics in Britain, may be seen in this light, as perhaps also may the increasing number of celebrity politicians across the world who perform the role not of effective politicians, but of people authorized by the electorate to speak for the breakdown of the political system.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the fate of “celebrity” in an era when the long-term fate of media institutions (and the constructed social and political “center” to which they appear to give us access) is itself profoundly unsettled. It has shown that social theory potentially has a great deal to say about how celebrities make a difference in the social domain, and why their actions are increasingly salient in a public world shaped by the survival struggle of media institutions, as the opportunities to simply turn one’s attention elsewhere, away from large-scale media productions, multiply.

No one can predict from here how the overlapping dynamics analyzed in this chapter will resolve. Meanwhile, celebrity discourse, for good structural reasons, has ever less ability to “express” or “redeem” the conditions of an increasingly unequal and stratified everyday life. Nonetheless, the continuance of “celebrity culture” – contradictory and paradoxical phenomenon that it is – remains assured for some time to come.

Notes

- 1 For a general argument against functionalism in media research, see Couldry (2005).
- 2 Over the past decade, work has emerged on journalism as a specific field (Benson and Neveu 2005), as well as detailed work on the specific relations between the journalistic field and other fields.

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Barack Obama, Media Spectacle, and Celebrity Politics

Douglas Kellner

In the contemporary era of media politics, the role of image and media spectacle has played an always expanding significant role in presidential politics and other domains of society.¹ As corporate journalism became increasingly tabloidized, the line between news and information and entertainment blurred, while politics became a form of entertainment and spectacle. In this context, presidential candidates become celebrities and they are packaged and sold like the products of the culture industry. Candidates enlist celebrities in their election campaigns and are increasingly covered in the same way as celebrities, with tabloidized news media and social networking obsessing about their private lives.

Celebrities are mass idols, venerated and celebrated by the media. It is indeed the media that produce celebrities, and so naturally the most popular figures in media industries become celebrities. Entertainment industry figures and sports stars have been at the center of celebrity culture, employing public relations and image specialists to put out positive buzz and stories concerning their clients, but business tycoons and politicians have also become celebrities in recent years. Chris Rojek distinguishes between “ascribed celebrity,” which concerns lineage, such as belonging to the royal family in the United Kingdom, or the Bush or Kennedy families in the United States; “achieved celebrity,” which is won by outstanding success in fields like entertainment, sports, or talent in a particular field; and “attributed celebrity,” achieving fame through media representations or spectacle, as in scandals or tabloid features (2001: 17ff.), with Paris Hilton, Lindsey Lohan, the Kardashian family, and the Duck Dynasty family as obvious examples of this category in US culture.²

Celebrity culture is intensified by constant media proliferation, and the implosion between entertainment, news and information in which celebrity culture infuses every sphere of life. The proliferation of new media and social networking has created an ever more intense and diffuse celebrity culture with specialized publications,

internet sites, and social networking fanning the flames of celebrity culture, and with mainstream media further circulating and legitimating it.

Celebrities are those who become the most popular figures in their field in terms of media attention, adulation, and sometimes acrimony. Publics seem to have insatiable appetites for inside information and gossip about their idols, fueling media in search of profit in a competitive market to provide increasing amounts of celebrity news, images and spectacle, thus providing a tabloidization of news and information.

In this context, it is not surprising that politicians, especially political leaders who are frequently in the media spotlight, have become celebrities, as publics seek news, information and gossip about their private and public lives, turning some politicians into media superstars and relegating politicians caught in scandal to tabloid hell and damnation. As Sean Redmond puts it:

Contemporary politicians are a type of celebrity and they work in the arena of “show business.” Each meaningful, telegenic celebrity politician is styled, coached, scripted, and trained for their life in front of the lens. One can read their journey up the political ladder as a series of auditions for bigger parts, for more air-time, and for a stronger self-centered, goal-oriented brand that voters and corporate sponsors will buy into. The public arenas we find them in, the speeches they give, the dinners they attend, and the advertorial work they do to raise finance and push a policy occur through the mechanisms and practices of celebrity spectacle and commodity consumption. (2014: 66)

Indeed, politics in the United States and elsewhere in global culture has become propelled in recent years by the proliferation and expansion of media spectacle. The mainstream corporate media today in the United States increasingly process events, news, and information in the form of media spectacle. In an arena of intense competition with 24/7 cable TV networks, talk radio, internet sites and blogs, and ever proliferating new media like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter, competition for attention is ever more intense, leading the corporate media to go to sensation-alistic tabloidized stories which they construct in the forms of media spectacle that attempt to attract maximum audiences for as much time as possible, until the next major spectacle unfolds and plays out.

By “spectacle,” I mean media constructs that are out of the ordinary and habitual daily routine which become popular media events which capture the attention of the media and the public. They involve an aesthetic dimension and often are dramatic, bound up with competition like presidential elections, athletic contests like the Olympics or the World Cup, or celebrations of cultural attainment like the Oscars, Emmys, or Grammys, which regularly bring on display the top celebrities of the entertainment industries and celebrity top achievements in the various fields for the year, boosting the celebrity power of those who win or are even nominated.

Media spectacles are technologically mediated events, in which media forms like broadcasting, print media, the internet, and social networking process events in a spectacular form. Events of everyday life, top news stories, and political events which feature compelling images, montage, personalities, and stories become the media

spectacle of the day. In this study, I suggest some of the ways that the logic of the spectacle promoted the candidacy of Barack Obama and informed his presidency, and will indicate how he has become a master of the spectacle and global celebrity of the highest order. I first describe how Obama rose to supercelebrity status in the 2008 Democratic Party primaries, and then deployed media spectacle in his 2008 and 2012 US presidential elections. My argument is that contemporary politics in the United States is informed by the logic of media spectacle and thus requires that candidates become masters of the spectacle. Finally, I discuss how Obama deployed his status as global supercelebrity in his presidency so far, which has also revealed the limits of celebrity politics and spectacle.

Media Spectacle and Politics: The Democratic Party Spectacle

Looking back at the 2008 Democratic Party primaries, we see exhibited once again the triumph of the spectacle and celebrity politics. In this case, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, the first serious African-American candidate versus the first serious woman candidate, generated a compelling spectacle of race and gender, as well as a campaign spectacle in incredibly hard-fought and unpredictable primaries. The Clintons were a primary focus of tabloid culture during the 1990s and 2000s, as henceforth every US presidential family would become, and were thus superstar media celebrities. As I argue below, Obama defeated Clinton in the Democratic Party primaries, and eventually became president, in part through his mastery of political spectacle and talent for becoming a political celebrity.

As a media spectacle, the Democratic Party primaries could be read as a reality TV show. For the media and candidates alike the Democratic primary has been *Survivor*, or *The Apprentice* ("You're fired!"), with losing candidates knocked out week by week. With the two standing candidates Obama and Clinton, the primary spectacle became the *The Amazing Race*, as well as *American Gladiator* and *American Idol* rolled into one, with genuine suspense concerning the outcome.

The Democratic Party primaries were also celebrity spectacles as Hillary Clinton is one of the major celebrities in US culture, as well as a former First Lady and New York Senator, while Barack Obama, a community organizer, Illinois state legislator and then Senator, was emerging as one of the major celebrity figures in US and even global politics.³ The spectacle of race and gender in a major US party primary was unprecedented as presidential politics has previously largely been the prerogative of white males. As Jackson Katz argues (2012), masculinity and presidential packaging of the candidate as the strongest leader, a protective father and a true man have been a major determinant of presidential elections in the media age. A woman and an African-American candidate thus break with the dominant code of Great White Leader, and as we shall see, Barack Obama came to challenge dominant conceptions of presidential masculinity as well as race.

From the first primary in Iowa where in January he won a startling victory, the Obama spectacle emerged as a spectacle of Hope, of Change, of Color, and of Youth.

After a victory by Clinton in New Hampshire, Obama then won 11 primaries in a row,⁴ and made a striking speech after the Wisconsin primary where he took over airways for about an hour, providing a vision of the US coming together, mobilizing people for change, carrying out a progressive agenda, getting out of Iraq, using the money spent there to rebuild the infrastructure, schools, health system, and so on. Even when Obama lost primaries, he gave inspiring and impassioned speeches, often surrounded by celebrities like Bruce Springsteen, Bono, or Oprah.

There was also an impressive internet spectacle in support of Obama's presidency, and the Obama campaign deftly exploited the emerging culture of new media and social networking that was in turn becoming an important factor in celebrity culture. Obama raised an unprecedented amount of money on the internet, generated over 2 million friends on Facebook and 866,887 "friends" on MySpace and reportedly had a campaign listserv of over 10 million email addresses, enabling his campaign to mobilize youth and others through text messaging and emails.⁵ Videos compiled on Obama's official campaign YouTube site were accessed over 11.5 million times (Gulati 2010: 195), while the YouTube music video "Obama Girl," which has a young woman singing about why she supports Obama with images of his speeches interspersed, received over 5 million hits, becoming one of the most popular music videos in history, thus augmenting Obama's celebrity status and making the young woman herself a minor celebrity, with her image circulating in the mainstream as well as new media.⁶

In addition to YouTube videos to support Obama,⁷ Obama art posters appeared throughout major cities like Los Angeles and on stop signs, underpasses, buildings and billboards there were hundreds of posters and stickers depicting Obama's face with the word HOPE emblazoned across. Even street artists produced pro-Obama graffiti and urban art in public places, with Obama's image competing with Hollywood stars, sports figures, and other celebrities as icons of the time.⁸

So in terms of political stagecraft and spectacle, in Obama's daily stump speeches on the campaign trail, his postvictory and even defeat speeches in the Democratic primaries, and his grassroots internet and cultural support, Obama became a master of celebrity culture. As for Hillary Clinton, she simply was not as good as Obama in creating spectacles, although she became proficient as the primaries went along, and near the end of the presidential primaries the spectacle of Hillary the Fighter emerged as she relentlessly campaigned day and night and was just barely beaten by Obama.

As noted, usually the spectacle of masculinity is decisive in US presidential elections (Katz 2012). George W. Bush bought a Texas ranch so that he could wear cowboy boots and cut brush, images mocked by Michael Moore in his film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. In 2004, John Kerry went hunting and smeared rabbit blood on himself to project the spectacle of Kerry the Hunter, but the Bush-Cheney campaign played images of John Kerry windsurfing, an aristocratic sport, and used the images of him swinging from one side of the board to the other to illustrate the flip-flop motif against Kerry.

Against Obama, Hillary had become increasingly masculine, positioning herself as the Fighter, the Commander-in-Chief, the aggressive campaigner, assuring white

working-class voters that “I’ll fight for you.” One of Hillary’s surrogates said only that she had the “testicular fortitude” to do the job, while another praised her, saying that “She makes Rocky Balboa look like a pansy” (Leibovich and Zernike 2008). In Pennsylvania, Clinton even played the gun card, recalling how her grandfather had taught her respect for guns and how to shoot them, leading Obama to joke that Hillary Clinton “thinks she’s Annie Oakley.”

In March, as the campaign rhetoric heated up, with each team trading insults, Clinton played the fear card with her ad proclaiming that it’s 3:00 a.m. and we need a Commander-in-Chief to deal with the crisis. In mid-March, Obama was subjected to especially nasty attacks concerning his Chicago associates, particularly his pastor Jeremiah Wright whose inflammatory speeches were circulating on YouTube and through the media and internet. In response, Obama’s remarkable March 18 race speech became one of the major spectacles of the primary season. TV network commentators were immediately comparing it to Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech, saying it was the most important political speech on race since King’s earlier landmark. Pundits, including conservative ones, gushed in praise of the speech, which dominated TV that day and internet and print media in the days following.⁹

But perhaps Obama’s low point came when he told a group of supporters at a fundraiser in Marin County, California that he was having trouble getting white working-class support in Pennsylvania because small town residents were “bitter” and “clinging to guns and religion.” The Clinton and Republican response teams attacked Obama as an elitist, out of touch, and contemptuous of guns and religion, but he continued to hang on to his lead in the delegate count and won primaries on May 5 in Indiana and North Carolina.

Thus Obama eked out a close win in the Democratic Party primary after a close and momentous battle and emerged as the Democratic Party presidential candidate, raising his celebrity status significantly, as an Up and Coming and Winning Politician. In a hard-fought Democratic Party primary, the Obama spectacle of youth, change, hope, and a new multicultural America narrowly bested the spectacle of Hillary the Fighter, potentially the first woman US President, as Obama emerged potentially the first US President of color. This spectacle gripped the nation and the global media, and set up intense interest in the Fall 2008 presidential election, which presented a spectacle of young African-American Barack Obama going up against war hero and veteran Senator John McCain in the general election.

Celebrity Politics and the Election 2008 Spectacle

Following Obama’s impressive performance on the stump in the Democratic Party primaries, coverage of both the party conventions and general election were dominated by the form of media and celebrity spectacle. While the McCain camp engaged in petty anti-Obama ads and attacks in summer 2008, Obama went on a global tour that itself became a major media spectacle as he traveled from Afghanistan and Iraq to Europe. Obama gave a rousing speech in Berlin that attracted hundreds of thousands of spectators and a global TV audience, and was shown meeting with leaders

in all of these countries, as if he were the presumptive president, establishing him as a global celebrity.

Since Obama had become an extremely effective creator of political spectacle, McCain presumably had to produce a good media spectacle himself, or anti-Obama spectacle. From the time Obama clinched the nomination, McCain largely attempted to create an anti-Obama spectacle through TV ads, planting anti-Obama stories in the press and circulating them through the internet, and eventually attacking Obama everyday on the campaign trail.

Although Obama benefited significantly through his supporters' internet and other cultural productions, he was temporarily put on the defensive in the summer when YouTube released videos of the inflammatory speeches of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, the Chicago pastor of his church.¹⁰ The deluge of Republican and then mainstream media circulating the Reverend Wright speeches and Wright's appearances on television and his highly controversial statements led Obama to break with his pastor. However, Obama gave what many believed to be a brilliant speech on race in Philadelphia, another spectacle that became a major cultural event on both the internet and mainstream media.

Underneath the spectacle on the broadcasting media, a Republican campaign circulated through the internet claiming that Obama was really a Muslim, was like Reverend Wright and anti-American, and was even an Iranian agent.¹¹ In addition to these underhanded sneak attacks, parallel to the Swift Boat attacks against John Kerry, the McCain campaign released TV ads equating Obama with Paris Hilton and Britney Spears as an empty celebrity, leading Paris Hilton to create an ad attacking "the wrinkly old white dude" (i.e. John McCain) and arguing why she'd be a better president; her YouTube video received over 1 million hits in a single day.¹² Quite obviously, the Republicans did not understand that Obama's rising celebrity status was helping him become more popular, getting more attention, support, and eventually votes from a population that is generally attracted by celebrity status and culture.

As the campaigns neared their party conventions, traditionally a great TV spectacle of the campaign, increasingly using celebrities to endorse and market candidates and attempting to intensify the political celebrity dimension of the candidates themselves, the presidential race seemed to be establishing once again the primacy of spectacle and celebrity politics where the election is battled out on the terrain of the media. Following the great spectacle of the Democratic convention in late August, with memorable speeches by Obama, Al Gore, Bill and Hillary Clinton, and a moving appearance by Senator Ted Kennedy, all national celebrities of the highest order, McCain desperately needed compelling spectacle. McCain got it when he announced and presented his vice-presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, who generated one of the more astounding media spectacles in US political history, catapulting her to instant supercelebrity.

Palin, a short-time governor of Alaska and former small town mayor, whom few knew much about when McCain selected her as his vice-presidential candidate, was a genuine surprise pick. It turns out, however, that Palin provided good spectacle and quickly became a major political celebrity. Palin was introduced to the nation

through TV clips demonstrating that she was a gun owner and activist in the National Rifle Association of America (NRA), with footage broadcast repeatedly showing her shooting guns. Media footage also showed that Palin was a high school basketball star, with clips repeated endlessly of her playing basketball (although Obama could probably beat her one on one). Palin's husband was revealed to be a snowmobile champion, providing more good sports spectacle throughout the media spectacle introducing the Palin family. Sarah Palin was in addition a beauty contest winner, depicted triumphing in local contests and coming in runner-up as Miss Alaska, so that images and spectacle of her as a pinup girl circulated the first day, which introduced Palin to the American public and quickly made her a celebrity. Governor Palin was presented as well as a mother with five children, generating many family pictures, including a newborn baby with Down's syndrome.

Then on Labor Day, September 1, a tabloid-besotted media revealed that Palin's 17-year-old daughter Bristol was pregnant and unmarried, triggering a sex scandal spectacle throughout the day and for months to come, sparking debates over whether a mother with all these family problems should run for vice president and submit her family to media scrutiny. More seriously, many political scandals involving Palin herself came out: she had fired state employees who would not do her bidding and had appointed unqualified high school friends and cronies to state jobs; she had supported corrupt politicians, had lied about her record, and had consistently taken positions to the right of Dick Cheney; so Sarah Palin suddenly became a spectacle of scandal as well as adulation by the Christian and Republican right and an instant media political celebrity.

Both campaigns were rocked on Monday, September 15, 2008 when the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment company helped trigger what appeared to be one of the great US and global financial crises in history.¹³ Suddenly, the election was caught up in the spectacle of the possible collapse of the US and global economy, so economics took front and center. Obama seemed to gain the initiative during the economic crisis as he made measured and intelligent statements on the economy, and so the Republicans desperately began a strategy of the Big Lie, endlessly distorting his tax proposals, accusing him of crony relations with disgraced federal officials whom he hardly knew, and making ridiculous claims about Obama's responsibility for the economic mess. It was becoming apparent that the Republicans were pursuing the Karl Rove/George W. Bush strategy of simply lying about their opponents, trying to create an alternative reality.¹⁴

For instance, from the beginning Sarah Palin's candidacy was arguably based on Big Lies, beginning with McCain introducing her as the woman who had stopped the Bridge to Nowhere in Alaska and a champion of cutting "earmarks," pork barrel legislation to benefit special interests in one's district. Palin repeated these claims day after day, but research revealed that she had supported the Bridge to Nowhere from the beginning, had hired a public relations firm to get earmarks for her district and her state, and had in fact received more earmarks per capita than almost anyone in the country (McGinniss 2011).

As the presidential campaign entered its final days, it was clear that contemporary US presidential campaigns were organized around the production of daily

media spectacles that embodied narrative themes of the campaign. Barack Obama continued to draw large and adoring crowds throughout his fall campaign, but also consistently tried to present an image of himself as cool, calm, competent, and presidential on the campaign trail and during media interviews and the presidential debates. Unlike the McCain-Palin campaign, he avoided dramatic daily shifts and attention-grabbing stunts to try to present an image of a mature and intelligent leader who is able to rationally deal with crises and respond to attacks in a measured and cool manner, giving him the current moniker “No drama, Obama.”

The spectacle of masculinity also played out in the election in novel ways. Barack Obama represented a cool, hip, black urban masculinity, in tune with popular culture, breaking with the tough father and defender masculinity typical of most previous presidential candidates, especially Republicans (Katz 2012). Obama was a devotee of basketball, but not working-class sports like bowling or hunting, and was highly sophisticated and multicultural. Hillary Clinton played the gender card against Obama unsuccessfully in the primary, claiming she was the true man and fighter, while in the general election both Sarah Palin and John McCain tried to unman Obama, presenting themselves as tougher, more masculine, and better able to protect the country in a mean world. Palin constantly talked about hunting and sports, was a highly aggressive campaigner, and mocked Obama relentlessly. McCain in turn represented a military macho masculinity, constantly playing up his military background and toughness in foreign affairs.

On election night, Obama’s supporters gathered in Grant Park in Chicago, the scene of a spectacle in 1968 when demonstrators chanted “The whole world is watching” during the Democratic convention, and the police tear-gassed antiwar protestors. In addition, Grant Park was the site a year later of the Weather Underground abortive “Days of Rage” spectacle when the group launched a rampage of destruction through the streets of Chicago. This time, however, a peaceful assembly of more than 100,000 spectators, mostly young and of many colors, assembled to celebrate Obama’s historic victory. In the crowd, close-ups appeared of celebrities like Jessie Jackson, tears streaming down his face, a jubilant Spike Lee, a solemn and smiling Oprah Winfrey, and other celebrities who joined the young crowd to hear Barack Obama’s victory speech. The park hushed into silence as John McCain gave his concession speech and the audience nodded and applauded respectfully, suggesting that the country could come together.

When Obama, his wife, Michelle, and his two beautiful girls took the stage, the crowd went wild and the eyes of the world were watching the spectacle of Barack Obama becoming President of the United States. Television networks showed the spectacle of people celebrating throughout the United States, from Times Square to Atlanta, Georgia, and even throughout the world. There were special celebrations in countries like Kenya and Indonesia, where Obama had lived and his former residences in these countries were becoming national shrines that would be tourist destinations. Barack Obama had become a global spectacle and his stunning victory would make him a world celebrity superstar of global media and politics.

The Obama Era

Following Obama's election, there was no question of his unique celebrity status. Obama's face appeared on the cover of every news magazine, and nightly television coverage of his vacation in Hawaii after the election and then return home to Chicago was delivered by a paparazzi horde perhaps never before equaled. Pictures of Obama shirtless on the beach in Hawaii and walking hand and hand with his daughters in Chicago became iconic of the handsome young man who had ascended to the pinnacle of political power.

The pre-inaugural spectacle in January was memorable and perhaps unparalleled in recent US history. Following a precedent of Abraham Lincoln, Obama took a train ride from New York to Washington, stopping in Philadelphia to make a speech and to pick up Vice President Joe Biden and his family in Wilmington, Delaware and do some speechifying and photo ops with the Bidens. Along the way, large crowds assembled in train stations to greet Obama and there were even cheering crowds along the track en route to the capital city.

Monday, January 19, 2009 happened to be Martin Luther King's birthday and a national holiday, and fittingly a day of memorials and a major concert at the Washington Mall featuring Bruce Springsteen, Stevie Wonder, and an A-list of musical performers entertained large crowds. A record 1 million or more people were already in the nation's capital and the festive mood was palpable as the television networks covered the day's festivities and the joyous crowd, which itself became a spectacle of celebration and happiness.

The Obama inaugural spectacle was as well planned and performed as the primary and presidential campaigns. An unprecedented 2 million people braved the cold and the crowds to come to Washington for the transformative event of inaugurating Obama as President of the United States. Never before has the country seen such a massive number of happy, celebrating people from all walks of life and parts of the country join the traditional inaugural ceremony, marred only by the bumbling conservative Supreme Court Justice John Roberts, who bungled the oath of office, throwing Obama momentarily off-stride. The spectacle included the last four presidents and their families and Dick Cheney coming up in a wheelchair after allegedly throwing out his back from lifting boxes in his new home. While Obama's traditionally short inaugural speech did not have the lofty and soaring rhetoric and crowd-pleasing chants of his most memorable discourses, its recognition of the severity of the crisis confronting the country, and the need for fundamental change in politics and in the values from the Bush/Cheney administration, and his determination to confront the problems satisfied the crowds and most serious observers.

Obama's first presidential inaugural address highlighted the depth of the economic, social, and political malaise that the country was suffering and the need to address immediately the severe economic crisis and to begin ending two unpopular foreign wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Obama 2009). Obama's first 100 days were highly ambitious in pushing through emergency measures to try to get the economy back on track, ramming through a \$787 billion stimulus (described as a

“recovery and reinvestment”) plan, a bank bailout package involving controversial legislation that constituted government takeover of banks’ “toxic” assets, a housing recovery program, an expansion of the Federal Reserve, and a budget geared to stimulating the economy, rebuilding the infrastructure, and creating jobs. Obama made good on his tax cut for the middle classes and promised a radical overhaul of the health system, Congressional spending, and even military spending. Further, President Obama transformed policy on stem cell research, women’s reproductive and labor rights, the environment, and national security, through executive orders. To be sure, Obama’s hopes for bipartisan politics were dashed when Republicans voted unanimously against some of his economic programs and budget proposals and partisan division seemed as heated as ever.

On the terrain of foreign policy, Obama used his supercelebrity status to engage in public diplomacy for his agenda and to promote US interests. In part, his global popularity, after bitter anger throughout the world at the Bush-Cheney administration, was a positive antidote to rising and dangerous anti-Americanism, and also provided leverage for Obama as a global diplomat to promote his agendas. During his first 100 days, Obama went on world tours, in which he met with European, global and Latin American leaders, demonstrating that he has become a major global celebrity, and suggesting how celebrity politics and spectacle have become normalized as an important, perhaps key, segment of global and regional politics. On his visits to England, France and the G20 summit, Obama received a rock star reception from people in all the countries he visited, with people lining the streets for a glimpse of him, and Obama’s image dominated the media in the coverage of his meetings with foreign leaders.

Obama was so popular globally that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 “for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples,” even though he had only been in office nine months (it appears that the people who awarded him this prize wanted to not-so-subtly induce Obama to earn the award). Yet summing up the first term of Obama’s presidency (2008–12), we can see the continued existence of powerful corporate and political elites in US society, and the limits of being able to govern on the basis of spectacle and celebrity. Although Obama and the Congress passed a healthcare reform bill, because of the powerful interests of the health insurance, pharmaceutical and medical industries, it was impossible to pass a universal healthcare bill of the sort enjoyed by European democracies, and there were many concessions to the powerful insurance and medical industries.¹⁵ Although there was some reform of the financial sector, powerful Wall Street and finance capital interests blocked more serious regulatory change.¹⁶ And while Obama had wanted to close the Guantanamo prison in Cuba, associated with torture, and try the terrorist suspects incarcerated there in civilian courts, so far he has not been able to do this.

Hence, during his first term in office, Obama’s celebrity status did not help him solve major economic and political problems facing the country, or make much progress on difficult global issues. Typically, old Washington partisan politics, highly motivated right-wing media, and the overwhelming challenges the Obama administration faced on multiple fronts undermined Obama’s popularity and efficiency as

leader. Spectacle and celebrity are certainly important tools of governing in a media age, but they alone cannot overcome the obstacles of a deadlocked partisan political system and powerful economic, political, and cultural forces that block change, a lesson Obama would continue to learn in subsequent years.

In the 2010 midterm elections, the Republicans seized control of the House of Representatives, with some arguing that their victory was at least partly due to gerrymandering after the 2008 election, showing that celebrity and media spectacle cannot always win elections.¹⁷ Hence, the last two years of Obama's first term were marked by the majority control of the House by the Republicans blocking his agenda, and the country became acrimoniously divided as partisan media and social networking constructed fervent pro- and anti-Obama constituencies, producing an increasingly conflicted electorate that would be mobilized by both sides in the 2012 presidential election, in which Obama successfully won a second term in office.

Election 2012, Media Spectacle, and Celebrity Politics

In the 2008 US presidential election, Barack Obama's mastery of media spectacle helped generate a coalition based on hope and change that produced a decisive victory over his Republican opponents (Kellner, 2009). Barack Obama was seen by his followers as the One, a candidate of youth and charisma who inspired a generation to believe that meaningful change could be created in the United States. In 2012, media spectacle in the US presidential election focused on the struggle between the two major candidates and their parties.¹⁸ While there were many factors that helped determine Obama's win in the 2012 presidential election, as I suggest below, Obama once again effectively mobilized media spectacles and engaged in successful celebrity politics, whereas, as my analysis below suggests, Romney produced negative spectacles in his campaign and was never able either to become a celebrity himself or to effectively engage in celebrity politics.¹⁹

In the 2012 Republican Party primary spectacle, Mitt Romney ultimately bought the Republicans nomination after knocking off a series of right-wing candidates and moving far to the right himself to adapt to the mood of the Republican activist base.²⁰ By the end of the Republican primary slug-fest, Mitt Romney was the last man standing after raising millions, and spending undisclosed amounts of his own money, to bankroll his candidacy and emerge as Republican frontrunner by the end of the primary season.

On the last night of the Republican Party convention, marketed as Romney's Big Night, when he made his pitch for the presidency to his party and country, his use of celebrity politics badly misfired. Romney's convention speech was trumped by the spectacle of movie legend Clint Eastwood lecturing an empty chair which represented Barack Obama. Eastwood's rambling and slightly unhinged performance came during the opening of prime time in the last hour of the convention, replacing the campaign video prepared to sell Romney to the general public. More seriously for the Republicans, almost all the media buzz about the convention in the following days focused on Eastwood's venture at political performance art and speculation

as to why the Romney team positioned him at such a key time, leading into Romney's speech, and why they did not vet Eastwood's comedy routine, surely one of the more bizarre events in convention history. Indeed, Romney's convention speech was a letdown, offering vague generalities, and it "generated the lowest approval rating among surveyed adults since Gallup began polling this question in 1996" (Rothman 2012).

The Democratic Party convention opened in Charlotte, North Carolina on September 4, and the following day Michelle Obama gave a rousing speech telling the nation why they should vote for her husband, which, according to pollsters after the election, "improved 20 million opinions about her husband's job performance – overnight" (Wang 2012: A35).²¹ The next night of the convention featured a spell-binding 48-minute speech by Bill Clinton which contrasted successes and failures of Democratic and Republican administrations over the past decades, and argued why the nation should go with Obama and Democrats, and should not trust Romney and the Republicans who had created the economic crisis and the problems facing the country.

Bill Clinton had overcome one of the major political scandals in US political history after being impeached and having an alleged affair with an intern, which generated one of the biggest political stories of the era. Yet Clinton had survived the scandal of the impeachment spectacle, served out his term, and ended with a much better record on the economy, polity, and foreign affairs than his Republican predecessors (Reagan and Bush), or successors (Bush 2 and Cheney). Clinton became a global celebrity, continuing to be active in his foundation, and was one of Obama's and other Democratic candidates' strongest campaigners.

The Democratic Party convention offered throughout a spectacle of a multicolored audience, old and young, from all over the country, with a wide range of celebrities representing the diversity of the party. The multicultural crowd was represented on stage as well, with African Americans, Latinos, women, and a wide range of speakers offering arguments for the Democrats and the spectacle of them representing broad segments of the population. During his closing night speech after officially receiving the nomination, Obama acknowledged the failures and limitations of his first administration, but declared that he offered policies that were producing improvement and change, while Republican policies were the same ones that had created the economic crisis in the first place. Rather than presenting rhetorical visions of hope and change, as in 2008, Obama touted the accomplishments of his administration, sketched out issues and policies for his second administration, and argued for shared responsibility to continue solving the nation's problems rather than just serving the rich and forcing individuals to find their own solutions.

After the conventions, the presidential race was close at the national level, although Obama had slight leads in the key swing states. September, however, unfolded a month of disasters for the Romney campaign. After a failed summer trip abroad, marked by a series of blunders (see Balz 2013: 170f.), Romney dialed back on foreign policy pronouncements. However, on September 11, 2012, amid developing reports about an attack on US diplomatic missions in Egypt and Libya following

outrage and demonstrations throughout the Muslim world concerning an anti-Muslim video released on the internet by an anti-Muslim activist in California,²² Romney intervened and said that it was “outrageous” that the Obama administration had “apologized” to angry Muslims who were rioting in Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Romney had published a book, *No Apology* (2010), arguing that the Obama administration and their liberal allies had “apologized” repeatedly for American misdeeds, and that a strong America should not criticize itself, but instead should “stand tall” and assert the greatness of the American nation. Romney had also falsely claimed that Obama had gone on an “apology tour” after he assumed the presidency, a claim that was simply untrue.²³

The Romney camp was just waiting to trot out its “no apology” message, but the messaging was obviously ill-timed, as the next morning it was revealed that four Americans had been killed at a US mission in Benghazi, including the popular ambassador Chris Stevens. There was political uproar concerning how Romney was manipulating a national tragedy for partisan gain, as well as attacks on the factualness of his claim that the Obama administration had “apologized” (it had not).

Then, on September 17, less than a week after the Benghazi attack, *Mother Jones* magazine began releasing excerpts from a secretly recorded Romney speech to rich donors in Florida at a spring fundraiser, where Romney revealed, among many other things, that he believed that “the 47 percent” of Americans who pay no income taxes do not “take personal responsibility and care for their lives” and see themselves as “victims” who seek handouts from the government. As the days went by, more shocking sound-bites from Romney’s speech to the rich Republican donors were released, such as Romney joking when he described how his Mormon ancestors had lived in Mexico and that he wished he were a Latino so that he could get their votes (after recommending that Latino immigrants without papers should “self-deport” during the primary debates). Romney opined that the Palestinians did not really want peace and that a Palestinian state was not feasible.

After a firestorm of media criticism and mockery, Romney responded that his comments were “not elegantly stated,” but stood by his “off the cuff” remarks, complaining initially that his comments were merely a “snippet” and not the “full response.” He added, “I hope the person who has the video would put out the full material.” *Mother Jones* was happy to comply and released the full video, which depicted the unedited, raw, and unvarnished Romney as a rich member of the 1 percent out of touch with the American public, representing the class interests of the wealthy against the people. The video of the speech became one of the most seen political guerrilla videos of its day, collecting in days over 500,000 views as it went viral on the internet and became the site of intense media coverage and criticism of Romney for days to come.

The 47 percent video was apparently taken secretly with a cellphone camera at a Florida private fundraising event, was passed over to former US President Jimmy Carter’s grandson, who handed it on to David Corn of *Mother Jones* in one of the most successfully oppositional research stunts in history (Corn 2012). With his campaign in shambles, Romney had only one chance to reverse course, and that was the presidential debates, often seen as decisive in US presidential elections.

Romney's campaign received some momentum, however, with the first presidential debate and the inexplicably poor performance of Barack Obama in Denver on October 3. There were rumors that Obama was bored with debate preparation, while Romney appeared to have prepared and came out charging and generally dominated the debate. One commentator noted that "Romney had pushed around Obama, who appeared alternately sleepy, distracted and peevish. And the conservative Republican from the primaries had made a swift turn to the center on a number of issues important to independent voters" (Wilson and Rucker 2012).²⁴

Obama learned that failure to dominate the media spectacle of presidential debates could derail his ascendancy to a second term as president. He regained momentum, however, in subsequent debates and came out charged up, with most commentators scoring decisive wins for Obama.²⁵ Obama campaigned hard with celebrity entourages, including Bruce Springsteen, Oprah Winfrey, and Bono, and was rallying his troops for early voting, scoring impressive numbers in early voting states. He was also rising again in swing states while neck and neck with Romney in national polls. On the weekend of October 27–28, however, attention focused on a gathering hurricane that appeared to be a perfect confluence of extreme weather event conditions, which erupted into Superstorm Sandy, one of the most destructive storms in history. Sandy struck the east coast hard on October 28, centering on the Jersey shore, New York City and Long Island. The media spectacle of the storm drove all other stories off of the news, both the Obama and Romney campaigns cancelled their political events, and Obama gave decisive orders to the federal agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), telling them to "cut through bureaucracy" and "do what you have to do" to help the people impacted by the storm. A meeting with the Red Cross presented Obama as decisive and in control and, invited by New Jersey Republican governor Chris Christie, Obama was shown touring the storm area, observing the incredible destruction. In a joint press conference, Christie used terms like "the President was incredibly helpful," taking phone calls and getting FEMA to act, and Christie gushed praise of Obama as "outstanding," "fully engaged," and "proactive"; Obama returned the compliments and the event was portrayed as symptomatic of how Democrats and Republicans could work together to solve problems.

Romney, by contrast, was shown collecting and sending in canned goods, which disaster relief experts said were not needed as much as money and manpower. Moreover, Romney was shown repeatedly in sound-bites making strong anti-FEMA remarks in Republican primary debates, and ducking questions concerning whether he really thought FEMA should be abolished, along with Big Bird – PBS, the Public Broadcasting Service, put out *Sesame Street* – and Obamacare (see Balz 2013).

The last days of the campaign saw a fierce battle for the remaining key swing states of Ohio, Wisconsin, Virginia, and Florida. Obama appeared side-by-side with Bruce Springsteen in Wisconsin and Ohio, and had Bill Clinton to campaign with him in Florida, receiving enthusiastic crowds and good media coverage. Romney's "closing argument" speech, by contrast, had evangelical overtones, promising that deliverance was near. "Together we must lead America to a better place," Romney intoned. "We're only one day away from a fresh start, one day away from the first

day of a new beginning.” The big campaign signs all around Romney read “Real Change on Day One,” but change is an empty signifier that can connote anything, and Romney never made clear what changes he was going to make on Day One, allowing Obama to claim he was the “real change” candidate. Romney’s creepiest pitch occurred the last day of the election where to increasingly large and enthusiastic crowds, Romney continued his empty platitudes, concluding his closing speech with the cry: “Walk with me to a better future. Let’s walk together” (Ingold 2012). The phrase evoked the Sunday school hymn of my youth “And He walked with me, and He Talked to me, and He tells me I am His own,”²⁶ implying that Romney was presenting himself to his enthusiastic crowd as Jesus and inviting them to walk with him to the polls so that He could become president and together they would find salvation.

On election day, there appeared to be an immense turnout, especially in contested states like Ohio and Florida, with voters lining up for hours to cast their ballots. Election night, red and blue states came in predictably for Romney and Obama in the early voting results, but the swing states started to fall one after another for Obama, and at 1:13 a.m. EST, the networks declared that Barack Obama was reelected president, after he was awarded Ohio and thus had enough electoral votes to win the presidency with 332 electoral votes.

Obama’s Second Term and the Limits of Celebrity Politics

In postelection discussions of the 2012 presidential election, pundits and scholars seemed to agree that Romney was a weak candidate, and that Obama’s ground campaign and ability to get out votes was far superior to Romney’s. Crucially, some analysts believed that, as in 2008, the Obama team made much more effective use of new media and social networking than the Republicans. Richard Parker (2012) noted:

By September 2012, Obama’s Facebook page had 1.2 million likes – while Romney’s had just half as much ... Obama had twice as many YouTube likes, comments and views as Romney – and easily 20 times as many re-tweets as the Republican nominee ... Obama raised \$147 million from small donors who chipped in \$200 or less, nearly three-and-a-half times as much as Romney ...

Karl Rove’s American Crossroads, his “super PAC” – PACs are “political action committees” to support candidates’ election bids – lavished over \$300 million on Republican races, including a \$127 investment in Romney’s presidential campaign, but all of the major candidates Rove invested in lost, leading some to speculate that Bush’s “boy genius” and reputed “Republican kingmaker” was finished (Bruni 2012). Part of Rove’s problem was that most of Rove’s campaign contributions went into mainstream media, like broadcasting, whereas younger voters, and a growing number of the Asian, Latin, and other new voters that the Republicans sought are more involved in new media and social networking.

Yet one later academic study concluded that Obama's secret gift that ensured his election was a steadily improving economy (Vavreck and Sides 2013). While economic issues always play a key role in elections, I would, however, use a multivariable approach to analyzing election results, including media spectacle and how the candidate is perceived by the public; the "ground game" that organizes voters to appear on voting day, which included in both Obama campaigns a significant new media and social networking component; and the day-to-day events which in the 2012 election involved manifest blunders by Romney and his campaign and his overall failure to sell his candidacy to the public, in part because he did not become part of celebrity culture and because Obama largely dominated the day-by-day media spectacle of the election.

While Obama's first inaugural address stressed themes of hope and change, and overcoming economic crises and wars by moving beyond the divisive partisan politics of the past, his second inaugural address presented a liberal agenda and condemned the broken politics of Washington, appealing to the public to support his agenda, including reform of gun law and immigration, expansion of entitlement programs and rights, and addressing climate change (Obama 2013). Yet despite the optimistic and activist tone of his second inaugural address, the first year of Obama's second term in 2013 was generally considered to be a debacle. Despite one of the worst school shootings in history at Sandy Hook elementary school, and up to 90 percent of public opinion in support of gun reform, Obama was unable to pass significant legislation on this issue (see Kellner 2013). Nor was Obama able to pass significant immigration reform, advance meaningful climate change legislation, or push forward a progressive agenda. Moreover, Obama was on the defensive much of 2013, defending his National Security Agency against charges of spying incessantly on American citizens and foreign leaders, after the documents leaked by Edward Snowden revealed how Obama increased surveillance even beyond that of the Bush-Cheney administration. Further, Obama's watered-down health reform, reduced to insurance reform, experienced embarrassing attacks when the computer system failed that was supposed to enable citizens without health insurance to sign up for government support in the Affordable Healthcare Act.

Obama's inability to achieve the progressive aspects of his agenda demonstrates the limitations of celebrity politics. While the glow of celebrity can excite spectators of media events, and perhaps help win votes and elections, the mechanics of governing involves conventional politicking, and making alliances, deals, and compromises, skills in which Obama appears lacking. Apparently, Obama's celebrity persona alienated some of his opponents and made them even fiercer critics of his policies and person. Indeed, Obama's standing with the public declined dramatically in 2013. According to an ABC News/Washington Post poll in November that year, Obama's rating had slipped to 42 percent, "down 13 percentage points this year and 6 points in the past month to match the lowest of his presidency. Fifty-five percent disapprove, a record. And 70 percent say the country's headed seriously off on the wrong track – up 13 points since May to the most in two years" (Langer 2013).

It remains to be seen how Barack Obama will finish out his term in office, and whether he will ultimately be judged in terms of the fragility of celebrity politics in a

highly mediatized and conflicted political environment. We can conclude, however, that celebrity has become a major determinant of coverage of national elections and that winning elections depends on generating significant celebrity and controlling the media spectacle of election campaigns. Celebrity politics in the contemporary moment thus requires that viable political candidates become celebrities and use the same public relations apparatus and strategies that celebrities in other fields utilize, while deploying image control management to produce a positive image and avoid negative ones. Thus contemporary politics increasingly becomes subject to the logic of celebrity culture, which has its limits, as the case of Barack Obama suggests, in the face of economic and political realities and challenges, but which continues as a major constituent of politics in the twenty-first century.

Notes

- 1 On my concept of media spectacle, see Kellner 2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2005; 2008.
- 2 Redmond (2014) astutely notes that these categories of celebrity might overlap and fuse, such that “celebrities always exist as *blended* constructions where their status and discursive meaning constantly shifts depending on context, event, and media specificity.”
- 3 I am ignoring in this study Obama’s earlier pre-celebrity history; he first came to national attention through his dramatic keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic Party convention where he emerged as a rising star; Obama has set out his own political trajectory and philosophy in two well-written and best-selling books (Obama 2004 and 2008).
- 4 For an insider look at the daily events of the 2008 primaries and general election by a savvy reporter who closely followed the Obama campaign, see Wolffe (2009) and Remnick (2010). The latter provides an excellent account of the behind-the-scene maneuverings of the Obama and Clinton teams in the 2008 Democratic Party primaries. Neither book, however, provides adequate analysis of Obama’s mastery of the spectacle, little on how the campaign enthused and organized youth, and little on how the campaign deployed the internet to raise money and organize supporters, and thus misses the Obama spectacle that I am depicting. Likewise, the studies in Larry Sabato’s edited book *The Year of Obama: How Barack Obama Won the White House* (2010) fail entirely to engage the role of media spectacle in the election.
- 5 On Obama’s mobilization of the internet, see Rezayazdi (2009), Gulati (2010), and Cornfield (2010). Although the latter two articles by political scientists provide detailed analysis of Obama’s use of new media and social networking sites, neither engages celebrity politics, or the Obama spectacle that was the content of the Obama campaign.
- 6 See the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKsoXHYICqU> (accessed Apr. 2015).
- 7 For detailed analysis of the YouTube videos produced in support of Obama, see Kellner and Kim (2009).
- 8 On the ubiquity of the Obama Hope poster in the Los Angeles area, see Linthkicum (2008). The Shepherd Fairley poster connecting Obama and hope was reproduced so many times that the Associated Press (AP) which initially took the picture upon which the poster was based sued and reached a settlement with the artist. For full discussion of the legal and political issues involved in the Obama Hope Poster/AP Photo case, see Fisher et al. (2012).
- 9 For an overview of commentary, see Kurtz (2008).

- 10 For a detailed analysis of Reverend Wright's "God damn America" speech, see Wolffe (2009: 167f.).
- 11 See "Obama's secrets" *National Enquirer*, March 17, 2008, pp. 35–7 and "An attack that came out of the ether," *Washington Post*, June 28, 2008, p. C01.
- 12 For the Paris Hilton for President video, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1riiDGBdZWg> (accessed Apr. 2015).
- 13 Suskind (2011) presents a behind-the-scenes picture of Obama's relations with Wall Street, his early insider advice concerning a looming financial crisis from Wall Street players who attached themselves to his campaign, and the way that Obama dealt with the 2008 economic crisis in his campaign and during the first two years of his presidency. There were, however, criticisms that Suskind got some of his facts wrong; see Weisberg (2011).
- 14 On the politics of lying in the high intensity media and social networking world of the twenty-first century, see Kellner (2007).
- 15 See, for example, Michael Moore's documentary *Sicko* (2007) which illustrates the universal healthcare benefits received by citizens of Canada, France, and Great Britain. On the unfolding of Obama's plans to tackle healthcare during his first term in office, see Suskind (2011).
- 16 See Charles Ferguson's documentary *Inside Job* (2010) for a cogent account of the magnitude of the financial crisis in the US from unregulated banking and financial institutions, and the limits of the ability of the Obama administration team to deal with the crisis, a theme that is also central to Suskind (2011).
- 17 On the 2010 midterm elections and rise of the Tea Party, which organized itself as an anti-Obama force, see Skocpol and Williamson (2013). On the charges of Republican Party gerrymandering, see Meyerson (2012).
- 18 On the Republican Party's primary battles in the election of 2012, A. J. Schnack's film *Caucus* (2013) shows the Republican candidates marketing themselves for the 2012 Iowa primary caucuses, while Greg Whiteley's documentary *Mitt* (2014) presents a portrait of Mitt Romney, his family, and campaign in the 2012 election, as does Dan Balz's book *Collision 2012* (2013) which is filled with detailed analysis of the Republican primaries.
- 19 It appears in retrospect that the Romneys were too bland as a family to attract much media attention, although there was some generally negative focus on their wealth. For a revealing cinéma vérité documentary that highlights their ordinariness, see Greg Whiteley's *Mitt*; on documentation of the role of Romney and his family in the 2012 campaign, see Balz (2013).
- 20 On the 2012 election, see Halperin and Heilemann (2013) and Balz (2013).
- 21 Wang claimed that, like Nate Silver of the *New York Times*, by using data from major polls he was able to correctly predict presidential outcomes in 50 out of 50 states.
- 22 The video presented a crude attack on Muslims, was eventually circulated on the internet and created a global spectacle of outrage throughout the Arab world; while all the circumstances of its production and circulation are not known, the man who allegedly produced the video "The innocence of Muslims," an Egyptian-American Coptic Christian, was later arrested and jailed for violating his parole.
- 23 See "apology tour" among Romney's whoppers at <http://www.factcheck.org/2012/10/whoppers-of-2012-final-edition/> (accessed Apr. 2015).
- 24 For a detailed analysis of the Obama debate debacle, one of the few times Obama did not control the spectacle in presidential campaigning, see Balz (2013: 301ff.).

- 25 See Balz (2013); Cillizza (2012); and on the third debate, see the discussion at Huffington Post, Oct. 23, 2012, at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/23/presidential-debate-2012_n_2004043.html (accessed Apr. 2015).
- 26 The video of the “walk with me” hymn can be found on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txzOErCuQlo> (accessed Apr. 2015).

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Construction of the Public Memory of Celebrities

Celebrity Museums in Japan

Saeko Ishita

What Is a Popular Culture Museum Movement?

In many developed nations, the decades encompassing the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century are often regarded as the era of the “museum bubble” or “new museum boom” (Koolhaas and Obrist 2007). These terms refer to a period not only when the sheer number of museums increased but also when many of them expanded in size and renovated their spaces for new directions and purposes, often involving celebrated architects such as Kazuyo Sejima, Ryue Nishizawa, Jacques Herzog, and Pierre de Meuron. At the center of these changes was a more focused concentration on market-driven strategies, as increasingly the reputation and status of art museums and other public museums were determined in terms of the number of visitors and the size of their operating budgets. Thus, the power of unique building design and the innovativeness and attractiveness of new display structures were very important in attracting regular media coverage and increasing visibility for museums; consequently, these activities became a common response to market-driven mandates in museum management culture. Museums such as the Twenty-First Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (since 2004), the Aomori Museum of Art in Japan (since 2006), the Denver Art Museum (enlarged in 2006), the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (expanded in 2007), and Espace Louis Vuitton in Paris (since 2006) are just a few of the more prominent examples that were very successful at using new openings, enlarged and transformed spaces, and/or flashy, popular displays and exhibits to position or reposition themselves in this expanded museum cultural economy.

In this chapter, we propose to examine a specific subset of this “museum bubble,” the popular culture museum movement (Ishita et al. 2013), a shift in museum culture that has seen museums relating to the popular culture phenomenon become so prevalent that they have surpassed the impact of more traditional and historical

museums. More specifically, we investigate the celebrity museum, a museum dedicated to documenting and celebrating a famous figure whether dead or alive, fiction or real. As we shall see from case studies of two of these museums – the John Lennon Museum (JLM) in Saitama (30 minutes by train from Tokyo) and the Ando Museum in Naoshima (a small, remote island in the Seto Inland Sea) – the celebrity museum may very well constitute a new critical subindustry of celebrity culture in Japan. As such, this chapter undertakes an examination of the status of these institutions vis-à-vis official museum culture in Japan and offers some considerations about their purpose and long-term viability in spite of (or even in relation to) this present era of digitalization and globalization.

To begin with, it is important to understand the concept of the museum in the Japanese context. Three Japanese expressions define what a museum embodies and expresses:

- 1 *Myujiamu*, which is simply the transliteration of the English word into Japanese, and thereby expresses the transnational meaning of a museum.
- 2 *Hakubutsu-kan*, the proper translation of “museum,” which means a mansion which displays all creation.
- 3 *Bizyutsu-kan*, which means, quite literally, an institution that displays works of art.

In everyday conversation, *Myujiamu* is often used without distinguishing a type or quality of museum. Museum guidebooks often used these blended terms indiscriminately with the result that one can find all three of these words employed, as well as others such as memorial, center, gallery, and garden, to conjure up “museumness” or “some place like a museum.”

Even though everyday usage blends these terms, legally only the term *Hakubutsu-kan* defines a museum in Japan. One reason for this exclusive nomenclature in Japanese law is that since 1872 *Hakubutsu-kan* has been used as the equivalent of “museum.”¹ When the current museum statutes were established in 1951, all museums – from art and history museums to zoos and aquariums – were included in this *Hakubutsu-kan* category. The laws identified three subcategories and additional distinctions in their attempt to encompass the somewhat diverse origins and roles of Japanese museums (figure 8.1):

- a *A Registered Museum* This title implies both possession of official registration as a museum and having a designated director and curators. Use of this term usually indicates that the museum has been established by a local or national government.
- b *An Institution Considered as a Museum* Regardless of whether a director or curator is present, an entity associated with a particular institution is classified as this type of museum. Usually this type of museum is established by local governments.
- c *An Institution Similar to a Museum* This type of museum is relatively unregulated in terms of establishment requirements and limitations.

Category	a) Registered Museum	b) Institution Considered as a Museum	c) Institution Similar to a Museum	Not included in statistics
Purpose	Collection, display, storage			?
Establishing body	Local public entity		No rule	
Register	Yes			
museum law	controlled by the museum law			

Figure 8.1 Subcategories of museums in Japan

The largest number of museums, by far, fall into the third category. In 2008, Japan had 907 Registered Museums, 341 Institutions Considered as a Museum, and 4,527 Institutions Similar to a Museum, indicating that the third category represented roughly 80 percent of the total of 5,775 museums.

The number of officially recognized museums, especially those in the third category, increased greatly between 1987 and 2008 (figure 8.2). Beyond these three official categories, we would like to add a fourth, which could be called a Museum-like Institution and includes museums that are not monitored statistically

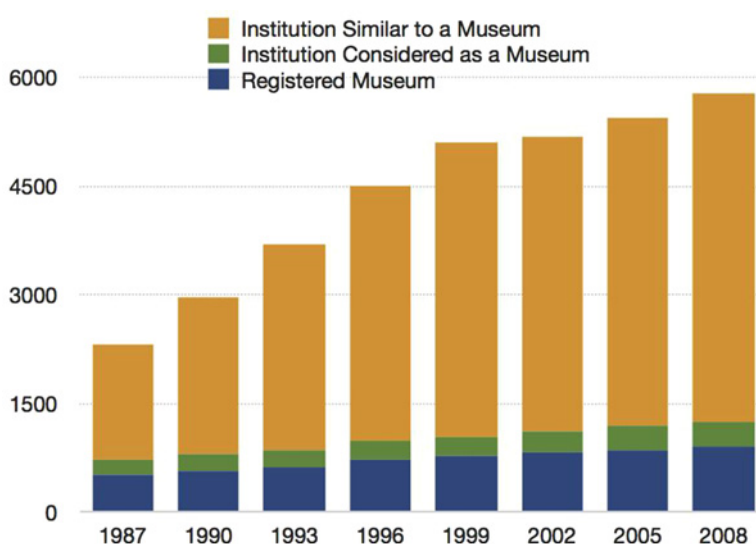


Figure 8.2 Change in number of museums, 1987–2008 (Data from Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, 2008)

by the Japanese government but have nevertheless defined and named themselves as museums. According to a search engine entitled Internet Museum, there were approximately 8,000 official and unofficial museums in Japan as of 2013; this figure would imply the presence of as many as 2,225 Museum-like Institutions (Tansei Institute 2015). As any private sector or any person can use the word *Myuujiamu* to describe a particular institution or facility, it is difficult to precisely count the number of museums in the country.

Although there had been a massive expansion in museums, a survey conducted in late 2008 by the Japanese Association of Museums (2009) found that the number of museums in Japan had declined for the first time since World War II. After the war, the high cost of maintenance caused many museums to consider either closing or reducing their size and budget. This more recent crisis identifies the bursting of the “museum bubble,” which has also happened internationally but has been particularly obvious in Japan. Interestingly, while the total number of museums dramatically increased in the 20 years to 2008, the total number of museum visitors per year remained static over the same period (Japanese Association of Museums 2009). In other words, the number of places to visit increased, but the number of unique visits did not. As a result, museums have clearly entered an era of competition, when they must struggle to attract their share of a finite number of visitors. All museums began to question their viability as they reconfigured the new delicate balance among the factors of economic value, maintenance responsibilities, and their institution’s relationships with local residents. Museums dependent on local governments or other local public entities have, in particular, faced the most serious crises.

While traditionally, museums have traded on their value and social image as equivalent to a “Temple of Confucius” or a “shrine” to and of “legitimate” culture, the modern museum faces two distinctive political demands: it needs to embody parity of representation of all groups and cultures, and be accessible to all members of society. Bennett (1995) describes these requirements metaphorically as the “political rationality of the museum.” In some sense, popular culture museums are expected to fulfill this mandate by expanding the scope and reach of museum cultures to demographics previously ignored, but most popular culture museums are not fulfilling this mandate because they are overly focused on a particular market. During this recent period of growing competition among museums, popular culture materials have gained considerable prominence at even the most traditional museums. Even more so than the public museums, informally constituted museums increasingly began to collect and display popular culture artifacts such as comics, material related to animation characters, and other media, and several of these collections became specialized museums of popular culture. For example, local governments such as Kyoto city, Kumamoto city, and Kitakyusyu city began to establish their own comic (*manga*) museums. Currently, in this subdiscipline of *manga* alone, there are approximately 400 museums (including Museum-like Institutions).

In addition, trips to sites/locations where various *manga*, anime, and television drama serials are produced have expanded rapidly in recent years. This type of travel and visiting has been called “content-tourism,”² where fans are drawn to the imaginary locations of animation films in a process similar to a pilgrimage to the

Holy Land. There are 1,400 of these sites throughout the country, each of which is considered to be the “Holy Land” to its fans. For example, a TV animation series *Lucky Star* (Raki*Suta), broadcast in 2007 and based on Kagami Yoshimizu’s four-panel comic-strip manga of the same name, inspired one of the best-known “Holy Lands” in Japan. The main setting of *Lucky Star* was Washimiya town, Saitama prefecture, and fans looking for the modeled places came to visit the town. In 2007, Washinomiya shrine saw about 90,000 visitors, but after that, numbers dramatically increased to 300,000 in 2008, and 420,000 in 2009 (Okamoto 2013). This type of content-tourism has led to the revitalization of many local economies in various regions of Japan and its success is suggestive of one way in which popular culture museums may solve the present challenge of attracting a higher total of museum visitors.

Celebrity Museum as a Site of Public Memory of Celebrity

In this section, we focus on the celebrity museum as a site that constructs the public memory of celebrity, particularly in popular culture. Public memory, Phillips (2004) has pointed out, was a popular and rapidly developing site of study in the 1980s and 1990s, and in response to the strong influence of Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory, case studies encompassed material from monuments to TV programs and museums to city streets (see also Halbwachs 1992). Phillips defines the notion of public memory in two ways: “the memory of publics” and “the publicness of memory.” According to *Framing Public Memory* (2004), public memory as “the memory of publics” occurs in the open, in front of and with others. These public memories are those we can interact with, deliberate over, and share. The arena of public memory becomes a realm within which we act together. “The publicness of memory” means the public appearance or expression of memory. We could apply the former notion of public memory to people’s activities and interactions with celebrity museums and the latter notion of public memory to the appearance or existence of museums.

In a broader sense, both the traditional museum and the popular culture museum are involved in the construction of public memory and have public appearances. However, as Phillips notes, one of the contexts of the recent interest in public memory is an increasing mistrust of “official History” (2004: 2). The typical image of a museum, we should recall, has been as a traditional institution for the collection, classification, and display of art and cultural heritage. For instance, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) defined a museum as an institution that “acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.”³ Thus, in the original episteme of museums, the showpieces are regarded as the objects valued for their collection, preservation, and research. The collection becomes, for patrons and curators, an assemblage of objects that have scientific value in terms of what they reveal about human history and/or evident artistic significance and value. By their actual display within the structure of a museum, these objects are imbued with a

sense of perpetuity and organized into a taxonomy consonant with historical order, thus defining and representing history as well as cultural heritage. As McGuigan (2006) observes, this concept of the museum was closely linked with modernism itself. The museum was in essence analogous to the “Modern Project.”

In recent political and cultural struggles over the activities of remembering and forgetting, the question of whose memories are inscribed onto the broader public horizon and whose are not has been an important and vexed one. The study of the celebrity museum in popular culture is one iteration of that argument, for if the traditional museum reflects the authorizing power of “official memory,” the popular culture museum reflects the struggles over remembering and forgetting.

The celebrity museum, as a subset of the popular culture museum, is a specialized museum attributed specifically with a particular name – essentially a proper noun – of a celebrity. Celebrity museums were developed around particular personalities because of their sheer popularity or, on occasion, due to their perceived influence: in many cases, celebrity museums are tied to the trend in market-driven strategies and were established during the period of the “new museum boom.” The celebrity museum also provides a structure of stability for the figure, transforming the celebrity’s potentially vulnerable nature, which is always susceptible (because of its inherent liquidity) to fading away and being quickly consumed. In many ways, museums facilitate a structured apparatus of celebritization because the celebrity museum produces a more enduring system and related discourse that extend the value of celebrity beyond the rapid pace of celebritification that defines the identification and use of celebrities in the media industry.⁴

The museum works in interesting ways to strengthen the imagined authenticity and value of a particular celebrity by identifying and storying the celebrity’s origins, and by enabling fans to experience what Dyer and Marshall have described as the “authentic” or the “real” celebrity. Dyer (1979) examines celebrities not as “real” people but as images, as the “real” celebrity constructed by media industries; however as deCordova (1990) and others have argued, a significant market and discourse has emerged in attempting to locate the “real” celebrity behind or beneath the public image. A great deal of emphasis in these discourses is placed on the private life and personal information, which some celebrity museums capitalize upon to validate the authenticity of both the celebrity and the museum. Such gestures of authenticity, Marshall has argued in the contexts of popular music celebrity, can have significant affective power and are useful for creating and enhancing celebrity–audience relationships (1997; 2006).

Celebrity museums depend for their own success on the celebrity’s status, a status determined by his or her value as a cultural commodity. Thus the celebrity must be an object of desire, drawing fans to see this “shrine,” in order for the museum to function as both a marketable enterprise and a means of extending the cultural power of the individual over time. This effect of the celebrity museum, then, is part of a larger metaprocess of celebritization in the culture through which celebrities sustain their value across time and space.

As noted above, in 2013 there were approximately 8,000 museums in all of Japan. According to the classifications of the Internet Museum database, we can divide these

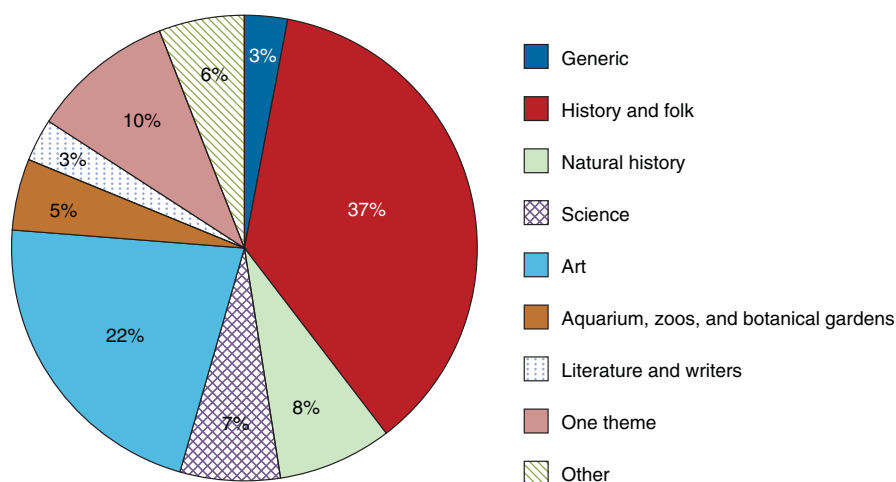


Figure 8.3 Types of museums (Data from Tansei Institute, 2013)

into the following types: history and folk museums are the largest category, with 37 percent of the total; 22 percent are art museums; 8 percent are natural history museums; 7 percent are science museums; and aquariums, zoos, and botanical gardens represent 5 percent of the total (figure 8.3). There are relatively more museums in metropolitan areas (Kanto, Chube, and Kinki) and relatively few museums in areas with low population density (figure 8.4).

Using a search engine and the Internet Museum database (Tansei Institute 2015), we sought out celebrity museums in Japan. The conditions that we applied were that the museum must be named after a celebrity or famous character, and that

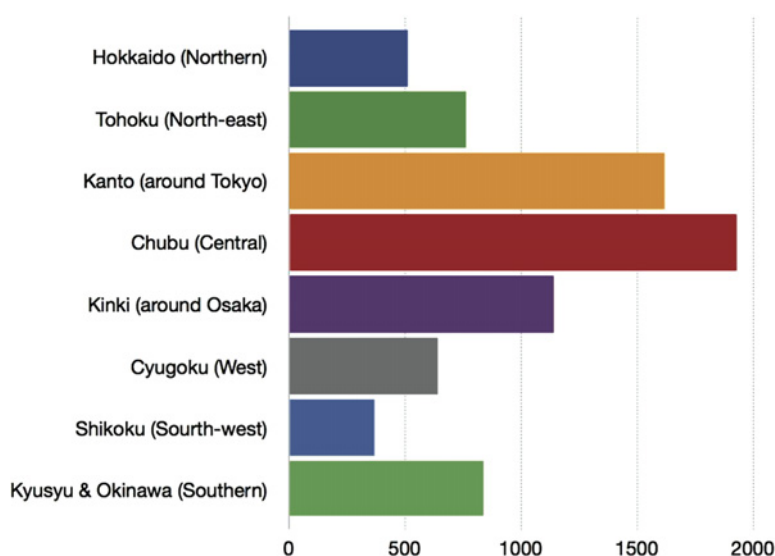


Figure 8.4 Number of museums by region (Data from Tansei Institute, 2013)

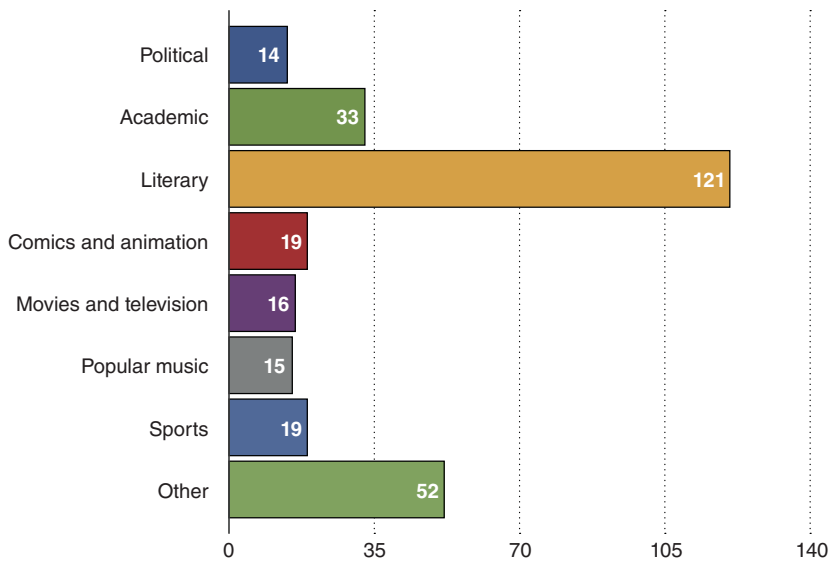


Figure 8.5 Celebrity museums in each field (Data from Tansei Institute, 2013)

the showpieces of the museum are related to the celebrity or famous character. We excluded art museums from the list (even if they were named for a particular artist), since art museums usually exhibit the famous artist's works and do not feature the celebrity per se. Among the orthodox museums (such as history and folk, or art), which account for roughly 80 percent of the total number (figure 8.3), few are named for anyone in particular except their founders. Thus, celebrity museums rarely exist within such orthodox museum categories. In the remaining 20 percent or so of museums, categorized as "generic," "literature," "one theme," and "other," we found many institutions that can be described as celebrity museums.

The total number of celebrity museums identified from the database was 289, as shown in Figure 8.5. We classified each of them according to the field of the celebrity's construction, that is, the sphere of celebrityization by the media industry. We classified celebrity museums in eight subcategories: political celebrity, academic celebrity, literary celebrity, famous characters from comics and animation, celebrities from movies and television, popular music celebrities, sports celebrities, and "other." From Figure 8.5, we can see that the largest field is literary celebrity which includes museums honoring famous Japanese writers and poets, such as the Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933) Museum or Matsuo Basyo (1644–1694) Museum. Most of the great writers and poets thus enshrined became popular from the Edo era to the Taisho era, that is, from the late 19th century to the first half of the 20th century.

Literary celebrities are well known because of the strong tradition of literary education in Japan. In general, they are quite popular among people regardless of age or gender, but they are especially popular among the older generation, who consume books as entertainment in their daily lives. Almost all of the great writers with museums named after them are domestic heroes or heroines, although there are a few foreign celebrity museums recalling people who dedicated their lives to Japanese

folk literature, such as the Lafcadio Hearn Memorial Museum in Shimane prefecture (Lafcadio Hearn is also known by the Japanese name Yakumo Koizumi, 1850–1904).

Second, we can observe in figure 8.5 that there are a considerable number of celebrity museums remembering local academics, scholars, and politicians who contributed to the modernization of Japanese society. They are not necessarily nationwide celebrities, but most of them are local heroes or heroines in the region where the museum is located. Interestingly, many of these local figures were not historically famous, and the specialized museums recognizing them were established quite recently. These museums clearly represent attempts to reconstruct and preserve local histories and their celebrities.

In addition, museums honoring the legacy of modernization and the modern industrial inheritance exist in many areas. For instance, Japan's Heritage of Industrial Modernization is a classification of cultural heritage and modernization certified by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. In 2007, it authorized 575 places across the country as relevant to this classification. Many of these Heritage sites included museums of local celebrities as heroes or heroines of modernization. Thus, one of the typical models for celebrity museums is a museum endorsing the public memory of modernization in Japanese society.

Celebrity museums also reflect the celebration and prosperity of popular culture. Particularly in recent years, museums in the categories of comics and animation, movies and television, and popular music have increased markedly, attracting content-tourism where fans travel to the settings and spaces made important by these fictional and nonfictional texts. In Japan, three large realms of pilgrimage are literary celebrity, the realm of comics and animation, and the realm of movies and television (fictional celebrities). Couldry (2000) has described these kinds of modern pilgrimages as "journeys to mediated places." Representative examples are the museums established by huge movie studios such as the Disneyland amusement park or Universal Studios, which have enjoyed great success in Japan as well as in the United States. However, this pilgrimage to the "Holy Land" created by the domestic animation industries and their fans in Japan is different from the experience at those American-styled theme parks because they do not always necessitate buildings or commercial facilities. In the case of Lucky Star, for example, fans enjoy visiting Washinomiya shrine and treat the shrine as a kind of Lucky Star museum. Animation fans also make optimum use of the internet to exchange information, and visit places where an animation was supposed to have been staged. These are imaginary places, unlike the "real" locations of movies and dramas. Such modern pilgrimages to locations in the center of mediated "Holy Lands" are distinguishing aspects of the celebrity museum movement in Japan.

Case Studies of Celebrity Museums

The categorization of celebrity types can assist us in explaining the examples presented in our case studies. In *Celebrity* (2004), Rojek outlines several types of celebrity. Type 1 is ascribed celebrity, a status based on lineage and that typically

follows from one's bloodline; type 2 is achieved celebrity, which includes film stars, pop stars, sports stars, among others; type 3 is attributed celebrity, which includes reporters, publicists, and all types of media professionals; type 4 is the celetoïd, or what Turner et al. (2000) have called accidental celebrity, in which incidents or events cause people to attain celebrity status unintentionally.

The celebrity museum is primarily based on the construction of the public memory of achieved celebrity (type 2). It is very rare that ascribed celebrity (type 1), such as the imperial family of Japan, is recognized by a specific museum. These people often appear in public as symbolic or honorary hosts of various cultural and social events, but there is no need for them to display themselves to the public through a museum-type institution. Attributed celebrity (type 3) affects the construction of other celebrities, that is, these people help to identify celebrities, although some of them may have a museum established in their name. The accidental celebrity (type 4) is only an information commodity for instant consumption and, as such, does not stay in the material domain of public memory for a long time.

Most celebrity museums in all the fields in figure 8.5 fall into the category of achieved celebrity (type 2). The fields of political, academic, and literary celebrities tend to recognize great achievements from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, or during the period of modernization. The other categories (comics and animation, movies and television, popular music, and sports) became popular in the latter half of the twentieth century, after World War II.

Usually, these museums are constructed after the death of the celebrity, although, in the case of famous characters from comics and animation, not all celebrated figures "die." In some cases of sports celebrities or attributed celebrities (type 3), museums are often established while the persons honored are alive. Even though the museum may have the word "memorial" in its name, in some cases the celebrity is still alive. For example, Sakaiminato city, Tottori prefecture, is known and referred to as the site of the *Yōkai* Museum. *Yōkai*, meaning ghosts, phantoms, or strange apparitions, are a class of supernatural monsters in Japanese folklore, and they are also very famous characters in comics by Mizuki Shigeru (b. 1922), one of the most famous early comic writers after World War II. There is a celebrity museum in the center of Sakaiminato city called the Mizuki Shigeru *Memorial* even though Mizuki is still alive and in good health at more than 90 years of age.

What follows in the next section is a closer examination of two celebrity museums. One of our examples is the John Lennon Museum (JLM, 2000–10) in Saitama and the other is the Ando Museum (opened in 2013) in Naoshima dedicated to the global celebrity architect Ando Tadao. Both of these celebrity museums are exceptional cases in different ways. Most Japanese celebrity museums are for domestic celebrities, but the JLM was a rare exception. The Ando Museum, meanwhile, is regarded as a new type of celebrity museum by the "museum industry." Both museums recognized achieved celebrity on a global scale, and they have attracted many visitors, but the JLM project ended in failure (the museum closed in 2010) whereas the Ando Museum has, so far, been a success.

In these case studies, we explore various questions. Who is considered qualified to be a celebrity with a museum named after him or her? What kinds of materials and

photographs should be displayed in a celebrity museum and how are they displayed? What kinds of connections between the celebrity museum and its host community are required? We also review the background behind these museums' establishment, their founders, and their relationships with local communities, and seek to clarify the nature of the interactions between celebrity cultures and their fans, the construction of the public memory of celebrity, and the relationship between the celebrity museum and the museum industry.

John Lennon Museum

John Lennon (1940–80) was certainly one of the most prominent celebrities in global popular culture. It is common knowledge that there are “sacred places” related to Lennon in New York's Central Park and also in Liverpool in the United Kingdom, but, even among fans, few people are aware that a John Lennon Museum existed in the suburbs of Tokyo.

The JLM opened on the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Lennon's birth, on October 9, 2000. According to the museum program, the museum was established with the official consent of his wife Yoko Ono, which had never before been granted (John Lennon Museum 2000b). The museum guide leaflet stated that “John had an immeasurable influence all over the world as the person who represented the 20th century” and that the museum would seek to “pass on his real image correctly to the next century” (John Lennon Museum 2000a).

The JLM was located in Saitama Super Arena within the newly developed Saitama city center, 30 minutes from Tokyo station by train. The Saitama city center project was part of an effort to reduce the overconcentration of development in downtown Tokyo, as well as to promote local redevelopment on a large scale. Ten ministries and government offices and 18 national organizations moved to the area in 2000. Saitama Super Arena is located in the development's multipurpose hall, which Saitama prefecture owns, and a private sector company, Saitama Arena, manages the facility. Taisei Corporation is one of the developers that constructed buildings in the area and Museum Taisei, a subsidiary of the corporation, established and operated the JLM. The museum's first director was Kikuchi Jiro (b. 1938), who took on this role after serving as a general manager for the Taisei Corporation.

The showpieces of the JLM divided Lennon's life into nine time periods: Childhood Memories (1940–55); Rock & Roll (1955–62); The Beatles (1962–7); Two Virgins (1966–8) or, in Japanese, “Encounter of John and Yoko”; Love and Peace (1968–70); Imagine (1970–1); New York City (1971–2); The Lost Weekend (1973–5); and House-Husband (1975–80) (John Lennon Museum 2000b). In each zone, Lennon's personal items and collections were displayed as in a typical celebrity museum. Items included grade books and watercolor paintings from his childhood, songs in his own handwriting, played guitars, stage clothes, passports, and various personal belongings.

If the JLM had been planned as part of a Beatles museum somewhere other than Japan, the exhibitions of the first three zones would most likely have been the most

prominent. In contrast, at the JLM the circumstances of the Beatles' dissolution, John and Yoko's commitments to the peace movement, and his days as house-husband were more heavily emphasized. The final zone displayed evidence of how much Lennon loved Japanese culture and included information on the summers he spent in Karuizawa. The program also quotes his perspectives on Japanese literature: "I think haiku is the most beautiful form of poetry I know" (John Lennon Museum 2000b). Additionally, many panels of personal photographs were displayed in each section, and most of these photographs were two-person shots of *both* John and Yoko. Although there are various debates about John's life history and personality (Mäkelä 2005), the John Lennon Museum guide leaflet argued that at the JLM only "his real image" was displayed (2000a). This "real image" clearly includes Japan and Japanese culture and these crucial elements rationalizing the establishment of the JLM in Japan were thoroughly integrated into the museum displays. As a result, while the JLM was a museum about John Lennon, it was also a museum of the world's most celebrated Japanese wife, Yoko Ono.

It is said that a total of 615,000 people visited the JLM during its ten years of operation. There were 124,000 visitors in the first year, but this was only one-third of the 350,000 annual visitors anticipated before the museum opened (*Asahi Shimbun* 2001). By the late 2000s, the number of annual visitors had slumped to about 30,000. In January 2010, "because the ten-year licensing agreement was over," according to Taisei's public relations office, the JLM's closing was formally announced. Fans of Lennon embarked on a campaign to collect signatures petitioning to keep the museum open, but were unable to overturn the decision. According to a newspaper article, the JLM's financial deficit was more than 100 million yen (about 1 million US dollars) per year (Kyodo 2010).

As for the location and administration of the JLM, critical voices on some fan sites and message boards on the internet questioned the museum's relationship with the community. In many cases, the relationship between celebrity museums and local communities is tenuous. As long as the celebrity museums are attracting tourists to the area, the local people welcome them. But the rationale for expending local tax money on the museum is immediately questioned if they become targets of market fundamentalism. In other words, celebrity museums such as JLM are not seen to be legitimate/cultural entities for subsidization and, in a way, must at least echo the popular culture profitability of their namesake.

The Ando Museum

Ando Tadao (born in 1941) is the most famous architect in modern Japan (figure 8.6). His dramatic life history and the story of his success as a self-educated architect are widely known. One can find plenty of evidence of his celebrity status in the numerous publications about him, his autobiography, an anthology, a collection of photographs, special features in architecture magazines and fashion magazines, his lectures in communities, his appearances on TV talk shows, and his role of visiting professor at various universities. Ando has planned and designed more than



Figure 8.6 Ando Tadao in Germany, 2004 (flickr: Tadao Ando)

250 major works in his 40-year career. He is, according to promotional material for his book, “globally famous” and “internationally highly evaluated” (NHK TV 2012), although nearly all his works during the first half of his career, in the 1970s and 1980s, were small buildings or individual houses within Japan.

Ando has been engaged as the architect for many museums since the 1990s. Most of these were built in Japan, but there have also been some prestigious overseas projects such as the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis, Missouri (completed in 2001) and the Langen Foundation Museum in Germany (2004). These works, and some well-known architecture prizes, including the Pritzker Architecture Prize in the 1990s (Bijutsu Tetyo 2001), legitimated his career and his reputation as a distinctive architect.

Observing the social situation of the 1980s, Sudjic (1989) argued that the “celebrity business” of architects and designers is a “new variety of celebrity.” Ando took advantage of this trend for his own promotional benefit in the 1990s and quickly gained success just as Sudjic had described. It is probable that he has had a comfortable relationship with the new museum boom, since his main architectural works have been museums and his international activity began in the 1990s. Moreover, Ando has been involved in the construction of several celebrity museums in Japan: the Watanabe Junichi Memorial Museum (1998), the Shiba Ryotaro Memorial Museum (2001), and the Ishikawa Philosophy Museum commemorating Nishida Kitaro (2002).⁵

In addition, Ando has been concerned since the 1990s with the Naoshima Art Project. Naoshima is a small island of several thousand people in the Seto Inland Sea,

which has been a historic region since ancient times. Naoshima has a considerable history and tradition and is discussed in *The Chronicle of Japan* (the second-oldest book of classical Japanese history, written in the early eighth century). Naoshima also contributed to the development of modern industry as a site of metal refining factories from the early to the mid twentieth century. Consequently, in the 1970s it suffered a series of environmental problems, including air pollution, smoke damage, and soil pollution; the island's population declined, and those who remained were largely elderly people, as was the case on some neighboring islands. But since the late 1980s, Fukutake Tetsuhiko, the founder of Benesse Corporation, has invested considerable capital under the slogans of "Redevelopment of islands by art" and "Symbiosis of nature, architecture, and art."⁶ Since then, many art museums and artworks focusing on natural environments have been established on Naoshima and neighboring islands. It is said that 1 million visitors per year now come to Naoshima, which is commendable considering the island's small population and its distance from Japan's leading metropolitan areas.

Ando is certainly one of the star architects of the Naoshima Art Project. Over a period of 25 years, seven museums in Naoshima, including the Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum (1995), the Underground Museum (2004), and the Benesse House Museum (2006), were designed by Ando and his company.

In 1998, the Naoshima Art House Project began reconstructing the old private houses of Naoshima, built 200 to 300 years ago, into modern art museums. The Ando Museum opened as one of the latest of these house projects in 2013 and is the only museum named after Ando Tadao. The museum has the appearance of a private house more than 100 years old, and the concrete structures characteristic of his style are incorporated inside. The building area is 114.43 square meters in size, making it extremely small in comparison with Ando's other works. A public interest foundation, the Fukutake Foundation financed by Benesse Corporation, administers the museum along with several other museums in Naoshima. It says that Ando donated this museum to the Fukutake Foundation (*Nikkei* 2013).

Neither Ando's biographical details nor his personal belongings are displayed in the Ando Museum; rather, one can see scale models and photographs of buildings that he designed, sketches of his ideas, and historic photographs of Naoshima. According to the public information provided by the Fukutake Foundation, the Ando Museum represents "a collective study" of the Naoshima Art Project, in that it represents the most important concept of the project: the message of keeping old things alive while creating new things that have never existed before. The project's leading figures have had a strong passion for resisting the idea of "destruction" promoted by modern society (*Nikkei* 2013).

The showpieces and design of the Ando Museum are not typical of celebrity museums, but the response from fans has been, in some ways, typical. In its first year, the Ando Museum received 53,600 visitors, which, considering the location and inaccessibility of the island, is a surprisingly large number. One can find many accounts, composed by fans who have visited the museum, in blogs on the internet. Most of them are articles by nameless individuals, earnest fan visitors. Since Ando is a celebrity architect with a large number of fans, visits to each of his architectural works

have been planned as a type of pilgrimage and this museum about Ando himself, as well as the seven museums in the Naoshima Art Project that he designed, have become a brand new sacred place for his fans.

The project's modern art installations and site-specific artworks have had extensive participation by local residents, indicating a good relationship between the project and its local community. For all islanders, admission to the museums is free of charge and local residents are said to have developed a sense of closeness to modern arts and to participate in art activities voluntarily (Japan Tourism Agency 2012). Local residents have also been involved with production of the Art House Project and with the Seto Inland Sea Art Festival, which was held in 2010 and 2013.

We have reviewed two cases of global celebrity museums, both of which attracted a large number of visitors. Both functioned to build relationships with the celebrity's fans during the modern era of globalization and digitization. The JLM was located in the center of a huge commercial complex in a metropolis, whereas the Ando Museum is located on a small island known primarily for the sea and its natural environment, but only the latter has thrived. At a time when museums must find new ways of operating, it seems that celebrity museums must also change their methods. Japan's celebrity industry has much in common with that in the United States; however its endorsement industry is particularly weak relative by comparison.⁷ Recently, however, the Japanese government has become enthusiastic about exporting its content-tourism business as soft power. Moreover, the museum industry deeply affects the tourism business and local promotion activity, as the Ando Museum demonstrates. Thus the museum industry arguably constitutes another component (the eighth by Rein et al.'s accounting) in the structure of the celebrity industry today (Rein et al. 2006; Turner 2007). The celebrity museum is a site that brings together the economic power of content-tourism and the cultural power of nationalism and nostalgia. The success of the Ando Museum suggests that local and national celebrity museums which use discourses of localism, nationalism, and nostalgia, and which function to affirm the history of the modernization of Japanese society, are important to the survival of the contemporary celebrity museum.

Celebrity Museums in the Period of Digitization and Globalization

This chapter has focused on the phenomenon of the popular culture museum movement. New types of popular culture museums have been established in various regions and in the period we have examined, they surpassed traditional and historical museums in impact. The celebrity museum is defined as a popular culture museum named after a celebrated figure and can be classified in a number of fields. The political, academic, and literary celebrities honored in these museums generally accomplished their achievements during the period of modernization; famous characters from comics and animation, celebrities from movies and television, popular

music celebrities, and sports celebrities became popular after World War II. As noted in the case studies of the JLM and the Ando Museum, the celebrity museum typically contributes to the construction of public memory of achieved celebrities. However, in order to anticipate the future of these institutions, it is important to consider the effects of digitalization and globalization on celebrity and fan relationships and how this will impact the museum industry.

Marstine (2006) has articulated four metaphors to describe the “new type of museum” that has developed and become popular since the 1980s. These metaphors are (1) shrine, (2) market-driven industry, (3) colonizing space, and (4) post-museum. The shrine is an image of the traditional museum as an institution built to preserve and store “treasures” and where the exhibition is designed to enlighten and educate the public. The second metaphor, a market-driven industry, is not meant to describe a specific type of museum featuring commercialism, but to express the common problem that all of today’s museums face. The metaphor of the museum as a colonizing space recognizes a line of criticism that has greatly influenced recent transformations of museums. Showpieces and display styles have been criticized as Eurocentric, colonial, patriarchal, and heterosexist, and this has provoked significant controversy. This criticism has led some movements to establish specialized museums displaying the ethnographic materials of indigenous people, immigrants, female cultures, sexual minorities’ culture, and so on (Clifford 1988).

The first three metaphors hint at the possibility that the conventional museum cannot continue in the same way as before. In contrast, the fourth metaphor, called the post-museum, introduces another possibility. The post-museum is not a place for enlightening people: it is a site where people submit and share problems. It empowers people of a community by responding to their demands and forging stronger connections to the place and space. The popular culture museum has stirred the expectation that it could be a type of post-museum because of the freshness of its forms and collections. For example, a special exhibition, “*Evangelion* and Japanese sword”⁸ toured history museums around the country in 2012 and was extremely popular. While visitors interested in the art of Japanese swords are limited, many audience groups were enthusiastically interested in this masterpiece of animation. This type of collaborative exhibition represents not only a refreshing of forms and collections, but can function to save history museums suffering from financial difficulties.

However, the actual situation of the popular culture museum is still far from achieving these ambitious goals and most celebrity museums remain in the range of the first three metaphors mentioned above. The failure of the JLM indicates a foreboding of the possibility that the celebrity museum cannot survive simply as a shrine for fans or as a market-driven industry. Even if it is a celebrity museum, the Ando Museum pursues an ideal closer to the post-museum concept, aiming at the reproduction of community. Its success might be regarded as a model for the post-museum. Further research on the Ando Museum could clarify the sustainability of this type of museum.

As the site of celebrity construction today has moved gradually from the conventional mass media, particularly the television industry, to the internet, we must consider the possibility that the smallest unit of celebrity “museums” in the digital age

might be celebrification through blogs or Facebook pages operated by the celebrities themselves. These digital sites can turn unidirectional relations between celebrities and their fans into bidirectional relations. They unfold beyond time and space, creating a fusion that has not existed so far. At the same time, a considerable number of museums featuring famous figures from comics, animation, and television dramas have already been built in various regions. These represent attempts to change digital and fictional celebrities into substance and these museums become places where fans can meet those celebrities who do not actually exist. One example that encompasses both of these trends is the “Hatsune Miku”⁹ phenomenon. Since 2007, this musical creature has gained a considerable national as well as global following. Her habitat is the internet and fan activities have spread her widely. Soon after the release of “Hatsune Miku,” for example, fans using Nico Nico Douga (a Japanese website similar to YouTube) started posting videos with songs created using her sound bank. These digital activities and sites created by fans are a kind of celebrity museum and, at the same time, one of the functions of the celebrity museum in the digital age. At present, the “Hatsune Miku” museum on the internet is huge.

We know that popular culture spreads easily across borders and is consumed on a global scale. From television drama to fancy goods, various popular culture commodities are forming a kind of shared culture on a global scale, but popular culture commodities in the global market vary as to their sphere of influence in each region and their markets are complicated. In Japan, we can see a prominent movement to increase the number of specialized museums, particularly in the category of comics and animation. One reason for the great amount of museum activity in this field, compared to other genres such as music or movies, is the relative superiority of Japan in this genre in the global market and the soft power strategies of Japanese cultural nationalism.

While Japan has more popular culture museums and also more celebrity museums in general than other Asian and Western countries, the competitiveness of various popular culture forms and their commodities in the global market differs according to the relations between the tourism industry and the regional community, both of which are connected to national support systems and government policies. Thus, the popular culture museum established in Japan has a connection to local regions, but should also be understood in the context of the sharing and consumption of global popular culture.

The 20 years during which the site of celebrity construction gradually moved from television to the internet was also the period of the museum bubble. The relationship between the celebrity museum and the construction of the public memory of celebrities in Japan is thus shaped by digitization and globalization. From what has been discussed above, we can view the celebrity museum in popular culture as a site where the currents of content-tourism and the soft power strategy as well as the discourses of nationalism and nostalgia flow together. They stabilize the vulnerable and fragmented nature of celebrity and work as the cultural apparatus to legitimate their authenticities. In short, the celebrity museum does not just serve the celebrity (and his or her fans) but it can, potentially, serve communities and the economic and cultural life of a nation.

Notes

- 1 The date of 1872 was the year prior to the Vienna World Exposition of 1873, the first world exhibition in which Japan participated.
- 2 Content-tourism is a Japanese-coined term which refers to travel to the original location of movies and television shows, and in particular to trips to the imaginary locations of animated films.
- 3 In 2007, ICOM adopted the following definition: “a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (ICOM 2015).
- 4 Recent work in celebrity studies has developed the terms “celebrification” and “celebritization.” Dreissens (2013) explains that “celebrification” of individuals entails commodification by the media industry. The term “celebritization,” however, can be understood as a long-term structural “metaprocess” related to the increasing presence and value of celebrity in societies.
- 5 Watanabe Junichi (1933–2014) and Shiba Ryotaro (1923–96) were popular Japanese novelists; Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945) was the best-known philosopher of the Kyoto school.
- 6 The corporation’s former name was Fukutake Publishing, a private company in the communication, publishing, and education sector.
- 7 Turner (2007) described and examined the structure of the celebrity industry, quoting Rein et al. (2006), who dealt with examples in the United States, where the celebrity industry is certainly more developed than in any other country. As they explained, the celebrity industry is supported by seven contributing “sub-industries”: (1) the entertainment industry, (2) the communication industry, (3) the publicity industry, (4) the representation industry, (5) the appearance industry, (6) the coaching industry, and (7) the endorsement industry.
- 8 *Evangelion*, directed by Anno Hideaki, was one of the most successful and critically acclaimed anime television series of the 1990s.
- 9 “Hatsune Miku” is a humanoid persona voiced by a singing synthesizer application developed by Crypton Future Media. Her first song was released in 2007, and her appearance was created by combination with animated moving images.

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Part Three

Celebrity Value

Introduction

P. David Marshall

Value is a very slippery concept and perhaps even more slippery when it is related to celebrity. This part is devoted to celebrity value and each of our contributions here has taken the idea of value quite differently. For Andrew Tolson's reading of politics, celebrity value is related to the conversion of techniques and practices that are useful in the presentation of the public self in entertainment structures and formats and translated then into a value for campaigning and elections. For Ellis Cashmore and his reading of the celebrity value of sporting personalities, it is an investigation of how the realm of endorsement defines and structures the meaning of the contemporary sporting celebrity and further facilitates the play of the sporting hero with the adoring public. And for Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff, value moves even further into the realm of the economic where the idea of visibility and influence, concepts of value that are at the core of the celebrity industry, are used strategically to produce millions of people desperately playing in the online attention economy and thereby inadvertently laboring on their identity as well as laboring for the social media industry's production and aggregation of information.

A cursory look at value and celebrity presents some obvious tropes that our contributors have identified in their analyses. First of all, celebrity value is often a study of the power of celebrity. Power can be defined in a number of ways. It can be a form of influence or it can be defined in terms of its convertibility from one field of activity to another. Thus celebrities for more than 50 years have been subjected to a ranking system. As Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff's research reveals, the Q-rating system has been used by Hollywood to determine the visibility of all sorts of contemporary entities from corporate brands to television programs; but probably its greatest impact has been in the value of celebrities. And as these techniques of ratings and rankings have gained in sophistication, it has become evident that positive visibility has been calibrated to certain demographics, class fractions, and ethnic and racial groupings in order to position the value of an individual celebrity with a

greater sense of targeting. Thus, back in 1989, as the consumer anthropologist Grant McCracken positioned himself as an expert on the value of celebrity endorsement, he could make quite precise remarks about particular celebrities and their value. For instance, he makes this claim about Meryl Streep: because Meryl Streep does not bring an identity “charged with meanings” to each of her roles, she carries little of a personal identity or a typecasting identity that travels between roles or outside of the film industry. Thus, McCracken explains that “Meryl Streep has limited value as a celebrity endorser because she is largely free of accumulated meanings” (McCracken 1989: 316).

This interpretation of visible value identifies how the individual differentiates himself or herself from the institution that is the original source of their visibility. This individuation, or what I called the “autonomous” nature of a public personality, and the need for the film actor for instance to produce some form of “transgression” to build and maintain celebrity status (Marshall 2014: 105–8) is at the core of understanding celebrity value. For Schatz and his study of the Hollywood studio system, it is precisely this separation of value that led to the decline of the system itself (and its structure of institutional power) and the emergence of the New Hollywood and its personality system (see Schatz 1996: 482–3). We can extend that understanding of the separation and convertibility of the value of the public individual and see it in operation – and expanding and intensifying – across cultural fields for most of the twentieth century and all of the twenty-first century so far.

In an elaborate attention economy, as Marwick’s chapter in Part Five identifies and Hearn and Shoenhoff’s contribution in this part explores, the public individual can serve as some form of siren for the organization of apparent value. To constitute a major charity event, it is incumbent on the organizers to have a celebrity in attendance to draw attention to the issue and concern. Thus the public relation managers of cancer societies, AIDS foundations, Greenpeace, and perhaps with the greatest vigor, the United Nations have all been at least partially consumed with procuring the support of an “ambassador” chosen from the celebrity system as a means to draw crowds and incite diverse media entities to spread images of the event. This extension of the influence/value of the celebrity system is seen as charity issues become political issues and celebrities become variations of political actors, as explored by Andrew Cooper’s contribution in Part Four and, to a degree, in Andrew Tolson’s work in this part. Metaphorically, a red-carpet structure now pervades our politics and culture, as the model of the film premiere becomes the ur-text for the production of any event on any theme.

For the public personality, the attention maintains and sustains their economic value, even when the attention appears to be altruistic in the case of charity work, and sometimes even when the form of visibility appears to be quite negative. Celebrities are the conduits of value yes, but also *values*. Through their sometimes over-the-top representations in gossip sites, in challenging videos and images that paint them in unflattering poses, they are discursive locations for the debates about moral positions and values in their diverse audiences. In their highly visible displays of the personal and the private, celebrities also sometimes are quite privileged information sources and operate as what could be described as contemporary moral compasses.

It is also not a surprise that two of our book's contributors have included the word "moral" in their chapter titles: celebrities are instrumental in defining the parameters of performance of the public self as Barry King's research in Part Five identifies; and Fred Inglis's historical study of celebrity in Part One sees a moral economy emerging through the celebrated that is worth identifying and valuing in a discerning way.

Celebrity value is a *mélange* of positional value. On the one hand, celebrities represent the absolute exemplars-for-emulation of self-branding that one recent publication has identified as the sustaining metaphor for both the contemporary and historical celebrity (Barlow 2014). If we take the broader conception of capital posited by Bourdieu – where economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital interplay and intersect and are articulated within and across fields (2006; Grenfell 2011: 31–2) – celebrities are able to embody a form of cultural and symbolic capital along with the economic. They articulate, sometimes through their dress, attitude and posturing, what is seen as valuable in the contemporary moment: it may be the particular style or perhaps their choice of manner of address that expresses this particular notion of taste and distinction that transcends class as much as it calls attention to class differentiations. This *mélange* of cultural/symbolic capital may be quite specific to a particular musically inspired subculture or it may be organized through haute couture and the perfume industry, where the celebrity's image is idealized into a marker of transcendent beauty (see Marshall's final chapter in Part Eight of this book). Simultaneously with these forms of capital, celebrity identifies a kind of *nouveau riche* of economic capital and value, as Jo Piazza's recent exposé on the often crass "appearance" money that celebrities receive whenever they are present (Piazza 2014). They are branded beings who circulate through other forms of economic, cultural and political power as the buyable commodities of contemporary culture. Currid-Halkett, an economist by trade, comes closest to isolating this convertible *mélange* of value. She calls it "celebrity residual" value and defines this as the value that some but not all public individuals possess that can be used in different settings and can be converted to multiple purposes (2010: 23–45).

Our three contributors to this part on value work through quite different constitutions of celebrity value as they traverse across the mix of what celebrities construct and what individuals strive for in our elaborated culture that prizes recognition. Andrew Tolson in his chapter expands on his work on the transformation of contemporary political discourse and communication. Through the core case study of Nick Clegg, the British Liberal Democrat leader in the election of 2010, Tolson is able to disaggregate the celebrity effect in contemporary politics. In contrast to Street's study of celebrity politics (2004), the chapter focuses on what can be described as the way mediated identities inform political discourse. Cleggmania, which was used to describe the affective media involvement in the candidacy of Nick Clegg and harkens to Beatlemania, displays how politicians fit into an identity that can be described as expressing a celebrity identity. This "celebritization" is dependent on an audience of citizens who see this celebrity-mediated discourse as both interesting and valuable. As politicians adopt this discourse in their personalization of expression and in what, Tolson underlines, is their consistent appeal to ordinariness, they are able to

articulate a discourse of potential change. Tolson identifies this potential – a kind of gloss of the mediated personality combined with an appeal to their everydayness – as a repeating trope of mediated politics and how it is expressed in the personalization of leadership that provides illusion and, inevitably disillusion. Celebrity for Tolson is a technique derived from mediated celebrity and now integrated into contemporary politics.

Ellis Cashmore's chapter perhaps is most closely aligned to analyzing the branded and economic value of the current sports star. As his analysis reveals, more than 80 percent of the incomes of current top sports stars is derived from endorsements, as sports celebrities migrate as a source of value to endow other goods with some sort of authentic meaning. His chapter's quest is to work out how sport moved so clearly into the center of popular culture that its stars naturally became celebrities of equal or greater value compared to those in any other form of public life. To a degree, Cashmore focuses on the transformation of the value of sport from the 1980s and 1990s, when its very authenticity represented its clear and contrasting value to the celebrity world of the rest of the entertainment industry. This authenticity allowed the brands of Jordan, Beckham and Sharapova to flourish. The trade-off for the athletes as they have embraced the public identity of the endorser/celebrity persona is a loss of personal freedom as their lives are both commodified and subject to the public microscope of pervasive visibility.

The final contribution to our part on celebrity value, by Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff, analyzes the expansion of this culture of visibility. The authors make a compelling argument that under the category of the social media influencer, the structural value of the celebrity has been dispersed as legions of people actively construct their visibility. The chapter pieces together a history of how the entertainment and marketing industries have tracked relative personal influence over the last century, and ultimately how this linked to the current generation of online applications and monitors of impact such as Klout. By the 1990s, the authors claim, branding had become a comfortable way for celebrities both to imagine themselves and to construct themselves for their deployment and application to the market, as other technologies of publicity rights for the individual consolidated, particularly in entertainment law. The translation of the monitoring of the audience to the monitoring of the online social media user/prosumer, who is drawn into a linked and parallel universe of self-branding that resembles the celebrity self-branding work, describes the odd new labor economy of the contemporary moment. Social media influencers are tracked for their impact and value, but the game of building impact and reputation feeds into the markets and advertising worlds through data collection: it rarely feeds back into a celebrity-like economic impact for the aspiring millions of potential micro-celebrities as this new form of capitalism maintains and reinforces its inequalities.

As the four authors of these three chapters show, evaluating celebrity value reveals a complex aspirational cultural economy that has not only been appropriated pervasively across online culture but has had transformative impacts on politics and sport. The individual celebrity's value may fade away; however, celebrity value is systemically far from simple and by no means evanescent.

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Hope Springs Eternal?

The Illusions and Disillusions of Political Celebrity

Andrew Tolson

“Cleggmania” as Political Celebritization

On November 10, 2013, writing in the *Observer* newspaper, its chief political correspondent, Andrew Rawnsley, reported that negotiations to stage televised party leader debates at the next United Kingdom general election (in 2015) had stalled. The principal obstacles were reservations from the ruling Conservative Party. In part these were the familiar reservations of any party in power about handing an equal platform to their opponents (reservations which had prevented such debates taking place in the past). More specifically, however, they were to do with a growing perception among the Tories that the leader of the opposition could only benefit from such high profile media exposure. In this context Rawnsley also mentioned a sub-text, a memory, which was the extraordinary and unprecedented consequence of the first series of such debates in 2010. These gave prominence to the hitherto relatively unknown leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg – who became, at least for the duration of the campaign, something of a “celebrity politician.”

In this chapter my intention is to use the example of Nick Clegg to arrive at some general observations about the *discourse* of political celebrity. Here my use of the term “discourse” connects with previous work on “media talk” (Tolson 2006; Hutchby 2006) which examines the way forms of talk (such as interviews, speeches and debates) are designed to engage with an “overhearing audience” (Scannell 1991). The argument is that political celebrity as discourse is not an inherent quality possessed by some charismatic individuals, but rather is an effect of ways of speaking and performing politics, in contemporary mediated environments. As we shall see, this also seems to require the production of a particular kind of political argument that can be judged, however temporarily, to be novel and exciting. This analysis is not therefore restricted to Clegg himself, even though, as one discussion has insisted, “Clegg unarguably assumed the role of key protagonist in the overarching narrative

of the [UK 2010] election” (Parry and Richardson 2011: 475). On the contrary, my analysis of Clegg’s political celebrity makes links with previous incarnations (Tony Blair) and also involves some comparisons with United States presidents.

Such was the excitement surrounding Clegg in 2010 that it was characterized by the national press as a period of “Cleggmania”; and the intertextual reference to the Beatles indicated, explicitly, that a process of what Graeme Turner (2010a) has called “celebritization” was underway. The term “Cleggmania” was used, in particular, in the context of a journalistic “discursive elaboration” (Washbourne 2013) of Clegg’s performance in the first of the 2010 leaders debates (on ITV, April 15). It was motivated, in particular, by an extraordinary bounce in opinion polls in favor of Clegg and the Liberal Democrats following that debate. The term itself seems to have originated in the broadsheet press: the internet site “Comment is free” published by the *Guardian* had an article on April 16 with “Cleggmania” in its headline, and on Sunday, April 18, the *Independent* announced that “Cleggmania spreads across Britain”: “One sure-footed TV performance, and the Lib Dem leader has transformed the election campaign. Jane Merrick and Brian Brady tell the inside story of how he did it.” In fact Merrick’s journalistic analysis of Clegg’s performance is typically impressionistic, referring to his projection of “sincerity” and a “natural charm” carefully rehearsed with his advisors. As we shall see in this chapter, there is an important dimension of televisual communication missing from that sort of account.

Also on Sunday, April 18, the headline from the *Independent* was included in a montage shown on the BBC’s 10 o’clock news. The following evening “Cleggmania” was referred to by the BBC’s deputy political correspondent. However alongside this occasional usage in news bulletins, there was what might be described as a more conversational journalistic “chat,” in specialized (and live) current affairs programming, which introduced a wider lexicon of celebrity references. Prominent among these were references to talent shows, in particular the *X Factor*, such as “X Factor type performance” and “That’s X Factor politics” – used by Andrew Neil, presenter of the *Daily Politics* (April 19–20) – or in this contribution to a conversation with fellow journalists by the BBC’s Jon Sopel: “But there is something serious there going on in the sense that we’ve all got this X factor generation of people who are kind of ‘Jedward fantastic gotta vote there on Nick Clegg from zero to hero’ ...” (*Politics Show*, April 18).¹ Here it would appear that it is not enough to identify a political celebrity, it is also necessary to reproduce the “celebrity talk” allegedly spoken by the “X factor generation.” On the *Daily Politics* (April 19) it was reported that the leaders’ debate on the previous Thursday was an unlikely YouTube hit, with “I agree with Nick” (a repeated statement in that debate) T-shirts now in circulation.

Clearly then, in this journalistic discourse the discussion of political celebrity is explicit and it is literal. It is not a metaphor for a type of public relations or even a successful TV performance; rather it is directly linking the effect of that performance to a wider popular celebrity culture. How might the significance of this phenomenon be assessed? There may be three sorts of arguments one can make. The first is to recognize that this kind of chat about political celebrity on British television appears to be mainly located in marginal rather than mainstream programming – in daytime discussion programs rather than news. Here it has an ironic, even satirical function, in

speculative comments from “knowing” journalists. Secondly, possibly related to this marginal status, it might have had little real relevance for the election itself. Here the observations are mixed: it must be noted on the one hand that despite the “celebritization” of Clegg, the Liberal Democrats only increased their share of the vote by 1 percent and actually lost seats in 2010. On the other hand, they did (for the first time since World War II) enter a coalition government and, as one commentary asks rhetorically, “without Cleggmania would Nick Clegg have been accepted so readily as Deputy Prime Minister?” (Boulton and Roberts 2011: 35).

But in the end, any assessment of the psephological consequences and further political fallout from “Cleggmania” will probably be inconclusive. So what I want to do in this chapter is to investigate instead the celebritization of Nick Clegg not in terms of its effects on political elections (in 2010, and possibly in the future), but rather, as I have said, in terms of how this relates to general contemporary developments in political culture. Here “Cleggmania” was just one example of a wider trend in contemporary political discourse (in Western democracies), to which my title alludes. The “illusions and disillusions” of political celebrity refers to a discourse of false hopes, broken promises and a continuing crisis of “trust” in politicians (cf. Tolson 2011). It is in this context, I believe, that any assessment of the “celebrity value” of political celebrity needs to be located. I will return to this argument in the conclusion to this chapter. However to arrive at that point it will be necessary to clear a way through the now extensive literature on celebrity and politics (also appropriate for a volume of this kind) and this is the focus for the next two sections of this chapter.

Political Celebrity and Celebrity Politicians

In academic work on political celebrity, the dominant paradigm for around ten years (at least in the UK) has been what has been called the “cultural turn” in political communication studies (Parry and Richardson 2011). This has involved the development of a research agenda beyond the confines of “political marketing” to a wider consideration of relations between the spheres of political and popular culture. In some contributions this includes a critique of the “modernist” political ideology that insists on a separation of these spheres and which is highly pessimistic about the detrimental effects of modern media on politics. In their introduction to a collection of essays in this field, John Corner and Dick Pels argue that it is important not to pre-judge the situation in which politics has become part of the “culture industry,” where politicians rub shoulders with other members of the mediated “celebrity system,” and where, crucially, they are subjected to similar judgments on such matters as “style, appearance and personality” (2003: 2). Corner and Pels proceed to outline the terms of a debate around such developments: on the one hand political celebrity is one of the “three Cs” in a critical perspective (the others being consumerism and cynicism); on the other hand, it offers opportunities for new forms of political engagement and, in particular, new ways of judging political performance.

Here the emphasis on novelty is important, and in fact it is taken for granted. The assumption is, to quote John Street’s contribution to the same volume, that

modern political communication has become a branch of show business where “the currency is celebrity and fame, and the products are stars and personalities” (Street 2003: 86). In this argument Street is repeating a point previously made by Joshua Gamson in his brief conclusion to *Claims to Fame*, who notes, apropos of a cover story in *People* featuring the Clintons, that “the spread of rationalized celebrity culture is perhaps inevitable, especially in the political arena” (1994: 191). In all arenas this is the “imperial spread” of public relations techniques associated with “entertainment celebrity.” It is, as another contribution to this paradigm insists, a situation where “entertainment and its respective genres provide the dominant cultural framework with which to make sense of politics” (Van Zoonen 2005: 69).

Following these observations, two sorts of arguments have ensued. The first argument is based on an observation, that in several Western democracies since the 1980s, crossovers between the spheres of entertainment celebrity and politics have become increasingly common. First we saw Hollywood film actors becoming respectively President of the United States (Reagan) and Governor of California (Schwarzenegger). Following this, in Britain, the trend developed to the point where Street (2004) was able to distinguish between two types of celebrity politician: the CP1 – where elected politicians engaged in popular cultural publicity stunts; and the CP2 – where nonelected celebrities, such as Bob Geldof and Bono, became spokespersons for political campaigns (see also Drake and Higgins 2006). I have written about another of these CP2 ventures, when Geri Halliwell, following the breakup of the Spice Girls, briefly cultivated a career as spokesperson for women’s issues at the United Nations (Tolson 2001; 2006). In some cases, as Street et al. (2008) subsequently argued, cultural movements involving pop musicians could be assessed as “counter publics,” making effective political interventions in the public sphere.

However, it is a second argument made by adherents to the “cultural turn” perspective that is more relevant to this chapter. (Because clearly in the TV party leader debates Clegg was not engaged in either of the crossover activities described above.) This has to do with a further point that what is foregrounded in all these sorts of activity are the aesthetics of mediated *performance*. In Corner’s (2003) argument, it is the “performative dimensions of mediated persona” that become a focus for political assessment, and in Street’s discussion of celebrity politics, politicians are being judged on their appearance and “style.” As he puts it: “Style is the way in which politicians and parties communicate their relationship to the electorate and to their future public goals” (2004: 445). Street goes on to suggest that the key to effective performance in these terms is “authenticity.” In this view, “all politicians are celebrity politicians, only some are more convincing, more ‘authentic’ performers than others” (2004: 447). Again, as I have shown, the performance of “authentic celebrity” was vital to Geri Halliwell’s success at the United Nations; and it was similar to the criteria by which contestants were being judged on the long-running reality TV show *Big Brother* (Tolson 2006: ch. 8).

As far as Nick Clegg’s performances in 2010 are concerned, subsequent critical analysis has focused on two main points. The first is a general point about “presidentialization” – that if appearance and style are now to be taken as significant criteria in

political communication, this is part of a general focus on party leaders in contemporary politics (Washbourne 2013). Leaders personify their party brands, and according to one important discussion of Clegg, this can involve “drawing on the resources of celebrity to cultivate a new image of leadership” (Drake and Higgins 2012: 379). In their article, Parry and Richardson offer an extensive study of the journalistic discourse surrounding Clegg – the hyperbole and “trans-media metaphors” evident in “Cleggmania” – and they conclude that: “The material we have examined undoubtedly offers further evidence of ‘personalization’ in British politics. This refers to the shift of emphasis on to the voice, body, personality and private life of the individual politician, especially that of the leader, and away from the politics and ideological differences between parties” (2011: 486).

However it is the second dimension of another “cultural turn” article that I want to pick up on here. In passing, Parry and Richardson speculate that Clegg might have demonstrated some skills with “telegenic forms of mediated address” (2011: 476). This point is taken much further by Drake and Higgins (2012). These authors begin by acknowledging Street’s contribution to analyzing political celebrity, but they develop a more detailed focus on the specifics of mediated performance, adapting Erving Goffman’s work on self-presentation and “framing.” “Frames” are recognizable shifts in forms of communicative performance, and it is these that make possible an analysis of “political celebrity as a process,” which has nothing to do with links between politics and pop culture, but rather a set of communicative practices common to other effective “media personalities and performers.” These practices include speaking directly to the camera, using inclusive forms of address, and crucially in this context (a point which I develop below) interacting with individual members of the audience. Accordingly (and this deserves to be quoted at length):

Analysing these processes of framing and mediation is critical to a better understanding of the various formulations of political celebrity. Earlier we offered a broad definition of celebrity as a “mediated public persona.” We might then expand this to suggest that celebrity can be conceptualised as a mediating frame (or set of frames) through which different kinds of public performance are enacted and recognised as such by constituted publics ... Celebrity then, can be understood as a performative relationship activated through these processes rather than as a condition that precedes them. In such a conceptualisation, political celebrity is not an innate quality possessed by certain individuals, but a set of frames through which particular modes of political performance may be enacted. (Drake and Higgins 2012: 386–7)

So to summarize, the “cultural turn” in political communication studies has developed from the recognition of linkages between politics and popular culture, through a focus on the importance of “mediated persona” in the political public sphere (and the consequent focus on “personalities” in journalistic commentary), to an analysis of practices through which political celebrity might be performed. Central to all of this is the assumption that it is through *mediated* performance that such celebrity politicians are formed and reach their audiences. For 50 or so years this has relied on television, and for 20 or so years before that, radio. In this view political celebrity

is in effect a creation of modern mass media. In the pioneering work of adherents to the “cultural turn” it requires the techniques of media studies to make sense of it. But does political celebrity have a broader meaning and a longer history? That is the suggestion of an alternative body of historical and social theory, summarized in the next section of this chapter.

Deconstructing “Modernity”

This section will review various contributions to an argument about politics and celebrity that radically differs from that outlined above. It would be incorrect perhaps to characterize this as a “paradigm” because its contributors have different points of emphasis, different theoretical orientations, and at most (unlike contributions to the “cultural turn”) make only passing mutual references. Furthermore, some contributions to this argument do not explicitly use the term “celebrity.” Nevertheless, they can be usefully linked to examine the argument of a recent publication that does use this term (Inglis 2010, and his chapter in this volume). In *A Short History of Celebrity*, Fred Inglis suggests that “celebrity” has a 250-year history, roughly coinciding with the period commonly defined as “modernity”; that is, the development of urbanized civil societies with distinctively modern forms of individuality. In the introduction to his first chapter Inglis makes clear his polemical intent – for this historical *gravitas* is intended as a corrective to “the shallow and violent lightness of being attributed to fame in our day” (2010: 3). Here he might have contemporary media and cultural studies in mind, but he doesn’t say so.

A Short History of Celebrity works on two levels. Firstly it offers a narrative which is partly about famous people, but also, in the way they are clustered, about the social and cultural milieus in which they operated and which they can be seen retrospectively to represent. In these terms political celebrity appears most fully developed in the twentieth century, firstly as personified by the “great dictators” (Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin) in the era of “mass politics”; then, following a transformation in the key forms of mediation (from cinematic newsreel to broadcasting), in the “character” displayed by successive US presidents (Roosevelt, Kennedy, Reagan). Underpinning this narrative, at a second level, is a theory of celebrity. Since the eighteenth century celebrity has meant the “individualization of fame” (2010: 5), and these are individuals who have, in various ways, articulated and embodied what Raymond Williams might have called “structures of feeling.” Inglis therefore offers (in his second chapter) a “history of feelings” from the age of reason and enlightenment to contemporary aspirational individualism. It is the function of celebrities to define sensibilities – as the great dictators defined nationalist and racist sensibilities in 1930s Europe.

However, rather than focusing only on Inglis, I also want to observe that this is not the first cultural history of this kind. Arguably something similar was produced some 30 years earlier in Richard Sennett’s *The Fall of Public Man* of 1977. Unlike Inglis, Sennett does not trace a variety of modern sensibilities; rather he concentrates on just one, the rise of “personality” as a dominant factor in public life, which has consequences for ways of acting in the public sphere. Nor does Sennett discuss or

even use the word “celebrity.” However, he too offers a narrative of a similar time frame, within which various politicians can be seen to have had representative status. Thus in the late eighteenth century the libertarian John Wilkes became the first politician for whom “individual personality” (and not just the causes he espoused) was a “symbolic force” (Sennett 1986: 105). In the Paris revolution of 1848, Lamartine’s personality “acquired an independent status of its own,” giving rise to a “politics of personality” (1986: 237). In his focus on such examples Sennett makes his critical intention clear – for these are the origins of the unfortunate “modern impulse to find political measures worthwhile only to the extent that their champions are ‘credible,’ ‘believable,’ ‘decent’ persons” (1986: 105). There is thus a teleology to Sennett’s history of the celebrity politician.

What is the critical point here? It is surely that, though it might be useful to challenge contemporary dogma, projecting terms like “celebrity” and “personality” back three centuries might be equally misleading. The meaning of “celebrity” in the eighteenth century might not be its meaning today. David Marshall makes this point at the start of *Celebrity and Power* (1997). He argues that although the word “celebrity” had etymological currency as far back as the 1600s, and though something like a modern meaning of celebrity (as “heroic individual”) began to emerge in the early 1800s, this cannot be taken as equivalent or even as a forerunner to the “culture industry” established in the twentieth century. I will return to Marshall’s further argument that the celebrity politician is a kind of synthesis (“convergence”) of the three principal celebrity formations of that industry – part star, part mass entertainer, part television personality. At this point, however, I want offer my own illustration of Marshall’s critical point.

In a passing reference to Sennett, Inglis suggests that in his focus on the theater as the key site for the development of the cult of personality he perhaps “overdid things a bit.” Inglis argues that in the early 1800s there were other sites of celebrity – poets and courtiers “and most of all ... naval and military heroes and villains (such as) Nelson ... the old curmudgeon Wellington, and ... Bonaparte” (2010: 99). When I read this I was reminded of the passage in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, first published in 1857, where Elizabeth Gaskell discusses the fascination of the young Charlotte (in 1829, when she was 13) with Wellington and the Napoleonic Wars. Branwell’s toy soldiers were made to represent the main protagonists and Gaskell writes that for all the Brontë children “Politics were evidently their grand interest; the Duke of Wellington their demi-god. All that related to him belonged to the heroic age” (1970: 58). Nor, for Charlotte, was this a passing interest; she still “worshipped the Duke of Wellington” at the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832. “She said she had taken an interest in politics ever since she was five years old. She did not get her opinions from her father – that is, not directly – but from the papers etc. he preferred” (1970: 67).

Was this worship of Wellington as a “demi-god” a form of political celebrity? Clearly in that parsonage on the edge of inhabited West Yorkshire Brontë would have had no opportunity actually to see Wellington, or to participate in a “public sphere” of political debate. In Mrs Gaskell’s account, Wellington seems to be a character in an imaginary world. At most Brontë might have had access to some form of published drawings (though a cursory view of the *Leeds Intelligencer* in the online British

newspaper archive suggests there were no images in this publication at that time). In short, the conditions under which Charlotte Brontë consumed politics were vastly different from today. In particular she had no access to Wellington as a *performer*.

It is in the light of this example that I now want to reflect on another influential discussion of “modernity.” In various publications John B. Thompson (1995; 2005) has argued that the cultural transformations that comprise “modernity” can best be understood not as shifts in “values, attitudes or beliefs” (or structures of feeling?) but rather as forms of communication made possible by new forms of media (1995: 46). Not surprisingly Thompson has had a major influence on media studies, but in one respect his arguments are inconsistent – as regards his use of the term “visibility.” In *The Media and Modernity*, as part of his chapter on “The transformation of visibility,” he makes a qualitative distinction between forms of “publicness” made possible by print media and by newer electronic media, like television. Print media sever the link between publicness and visibility, or at best, offer the latter in an attenuated form. Television restores this link in new and distinctive ways (1995: 128–9).

However, writing ten years later, Thompson now includes print media in a “new visibility” which brings about a “profound” transformation in “relations between visibility and political power.” His argument is that there is a general phenomenon of public “visibility” associated with modernity. Now the “woodcuts, etchings and engravings” in early print media are now not so much attenuated as prototypes for new forms of political communication (though it is recognized that electronic media take these to new levels of visibility) (2005: 36–7). But if (as I suppose) for Charlotte Brontë, Wellington was essentially invisible, what can “the new visibility” possibly be, apart from a metaphor? Once again, as with the history of celebrity offered by Inglis, and Sennett’s discussion of public/political communication, it is problematic to insist on continuities that might be better differentiated, especially if we are to appreciate the true distinctiveness of contemporary political celebrity.

So let me bring this section to a close by referring to another discussion that covers some of the same ground as Thompson. In his assessment of “the impact of electronic media on social behaviour,” Joshua Meyrowitz has a chapter on “Lowering the political hero to our level” (1985: ch. 17). The argument is simple, and it does flirt with technological determinism, but it is also very suggestive. The medium of print, argues Meyrowitz, “reports on” politics but “is by no means a *presentation* of it (1985: 272, emphasis added). It preserves the Goffmanesque distinction between front and back regions, what is on and off record, what is reported and what is not. Not everything is known about the presidency and made publicly visible. But what the new electronic media bring is a new kind of stage which entails “a significant change in the political communication environment and in the style of performance.” The trend is “toward personal image and ‘expression’” and thus, “while we may not get objectively worse leaders, they are significantly smaller. The new image of our leaders is clearly one of human beings, rather than of gods” (1985: 283).

Although he also does not use the term “celebrity,” Meyrowitz connects with the discussion of celebrity politicians with his emphasis on mediated *performance*. (He also makes some perceptive comments on the performances of presidents Carter

and Reagan to which I shall return.) Performances can only be assessed by voters/audiences if politicians are presented to them, and for Meyrowitz these are media-specific assessments of “presidential style and dynamism” (1985: 280). That electronic media encourage the “lowering” of the status of the “political hero” is an interesting observation which clearly and explicitly contradicts the demigod status attached to Wellington by the young Charlotte Brontë. At first sight it might also be difficult to square this observation with the phenomenon of “Cleggmania.” What it does suggest, however, is that there is no single form of political celebrity, nor a continuous narrative of celebrity and modernity. What is signified by political celebrity today is a distinctive discursive formation, which the rest of this chapter will investigate.

Politicians Being “Ordinary”

At this point it will be helpful, in establishing the broad parameters of this investigation, to review the main conclusions to be taken from the discussion so far. The first is that, at least as far as “Cleggmania” was concerned, the process of celebritization begins with audience approbation. It requires a special connection with an audience – as Inglis observes apropos of “great dictators” “the crowd ... find in him what they want to feel about themselves” (2010: 158). It is this audience recognition that is subsequently amplified by journalists. Secondly then, as the “cultural turn” theorists have suggested, it should be possible to study the performances of politicians in relation to the projection of a “mediated persona,” to discover what it might be, in particular, that resonates with an audience – and here one would assume there could be nothing more different from the performance of a “great dictator” than the type of persona projected in a television debate.

For indeed my third conclusion adds an intriguing dimension to this. There seems to be a paradox in a situation where “lowering the political hero to our level” is now a situation to be celebrated. What might be happening today, in some forms of political celebrity, is not the recognition of charisma, but rather a “celebritization” of the performance of “ordinariness.” At least this is the hypothesis I will pursue in the rest of this chapter, for I believe it has been a feature of political communication, at least in Britain, for over 20 years (1993–2015). Furthermore there is now a substantial literature on “ordinary people and the media” (Turner 2010b and his chapter in this volume) which, together with my own previous analysis of “ordinary talk” in broadcast media (Tolson 2006: ch. 7), can assist in understanding this phenomenon. So let us now examine how ordinariness can be projected in televised political talk, such that a celebrity effect can be created.

As mentioned above, in previous “cultural turn” studies of Clegg’s performances in these debates the focus has been on what has been called (using terminology derived from Goffman) “mediating frames.” In practice this has concentrated on modes of address and interactions with members of the audience (Drake and Higgins 2012; Tolson 2013). For Drake and Higgins the concept of frame is used specifically “to delineate a particular relationship between utterer and audience” (2012: 378) and

Table 9.1 Use of address terms and cutaways across three debates in the 2010 UK general election campaign

	Gordon Brown	David Cameron	Nick Clegg
Address term			
Exclusive “we”	26 + 19 + 20 = 65	5 + 9 + 16 = 40	15+6 + 6 = 27
Inclusive/collective “we”/“us”	15 + 13 + 6 = 34	19 + 18 + 19 = 56	18 + 17 + 15 = 50
2nd person plural address to audience	6 + 4 + 5 = 15	5 + 9 + 7 = 21	14 + 5 + 10 = 29
2nd person singular address to questioner	1 + 4 + 0 = 5	8 + 4 + 4 = 16	10 + 10 + 14 = 34
Types of cutaway			
General shots of audience	5 + 10 + 3 = 18	8 + 15 + 2 = 25	1 + 19 + 2 = 22
Medium close-up shots of questioner	4 + 9 + 3 = 16	12 + 14 + 7 = 33	14 + 19 + 12 = 45

Adapted from Tolson 2013.

my own previous work on this builds on the suggestion of Parry and Richardson that Clegg might have used techniques of address that were particularly “telegenic” (Tolson 2013: 134). Thus both Clegg and David Cameron spoke directly to the camera, more often than Gordon Brown. They also used, to a greater extent than Brown, the populist inclusive “we,” to relate to the audience, rather than the exclusive “we” to refer to a political party. My own analysis confirms Drake and Higgins’s suggestion that Cameron used this address term the most (though only marginally more than Clegg) and they argue, together with the direct address, this works to sustain an impression of “para-social interaction” with the audience.

However where Clegg was clearly ahead was in the use of the direct address term “you.” This was partly used in the plural – and in his opening statement in the ITV debate (quoted below) we can see him alternating between that and the inclusive “we”: “I’m here to persuade you”; “don’t let anyone tell you” – he was marginally ahead of Cameron in his use of the plural “you.” But where Clegg was most emphatically ahead of both of his rivals was in his use of the second person singular to address individual questioners. Questioners were introduced, by the moderators, by name, which created an opportunity to refer to them with a “name check” in the subsequent answers. Clegg linked this strategy to use of the second person singular “you” more than twice as often as Cameron and seven times more often than Brown (Tolson 2013, and see table 9.1). This created an effect whereby, as Drake and Higgins put it, “a performance of ‘sincerity’, showing willingness to empathize with individuals ... ‘re-keys’ political performance towards a personal form of address, thereby investing it with a greater sense of intimacy” (2012: 381). For these authors this is itself “a form of address we might associate with celebrity,” but there is an additional visual dimension missing from their account.

As my analysis also shows, direct address to a questioner was frequently accompanied by visual cutaways, in the form of a medium close-up shot of that person, surrounded by fellow audience members. (The rules governing the format permitted this, though there was not supposed to be “undue concentration [on] the reactions of individual audience members.”) Thus, because Clegg most frequently addressed questioners he also received most of these cutaways, and these created interpersonal interactions which were *seen* as well as heard. Furthermore, where questioners were then shown to be responding (by smiling, nodding, etc.), these cutaways, despite the rules, amounted to visual *reaction shots* (Tolson 2013: 148–9). Drake and Higgins are correct in their point that this is precisely what Paddy Scannell (1991) defined as the “double articulation” of broadcast talk – the performance of a communicative interaction for an absent audience; but on TV this is not simply designed to be “overheard” – rather it is presented visually as a dramatic exchange. In the televised leader debates it was Clegg who most often exploited this dramatic potential.

So this repeated use of the second person singular address, accompanied by close-ups of the questioner, might explain how Clegg’s performances could be described as “telegenic” and this might be one way in which he achieved some resonance with the TV audience. However, in the broader context of thinking about political celebrity I now want to argue that there is an additional factor to be taken into account, and this is to do with the argument he was making. This is clearly articulated in Clegg’s opening statement in the first 2010 party leader debate (each leader was allocated one minute for this). Here, Clegg offers a rhetoric of novelty and change,² distinguishing his Liberal Democrats (as personified by himself) from the two “old parties” and claiming to offer something different from “old politics.” This rhetoric of difference was repeated regularly throughout these debates, for example in his attempt to appeal to young people (Tolson 2013: 148). The strategy of distinguishing himself from his rivals was also manifested in a propensity to make metacomments on the conduct of the debates, most famously in the ITV debate: “I’m not sure if you’re like me, but the more they attack each other the more they sound exactly the same.”

Here is that opening statement:

I believe the way things are is not the way things have to be. Now you’re going to be told tonight by these two that the only choice you can make is between two old parties who’ve been running things for years. I’m here to persuade you that there is an alternative. I think we have a fantastic opportunity to do things differently for once. And if we do things differently we can create the fair society the fair country we all want. A fair tax system, better schools, an economy no longer held hostage by greedy bankers. Decent open politics. Those are the changes I believe in. I really wouldn’t be standing here tonight if I didn’t think they were all possible. So don’t let anyone tell you that the only choice is old politics. We can do something different this time. That’s what I’m about. That’s what the Liberal Democrats offer.

So, as a communicative strategy, we can now see that Clegg’s performance in these debates works on two levels. A convincing display of mediated interaction is used to “authenticate” (through its “double articulation”) this message of political change.

But to assess the “celebrity value” of this strategy it is necessary to appreciate its specificity. As we have seen, there are arguments that Clegg’s performance in the TV debates triggered his rise to political prominence; but equally the notion that political celebrity is used to “sell” politics, like a commodity, can perhaps be exaggerated. This is not the type of value conferred by celebrity endorsement, nor is it simply (as in Street’s argument) that politicians are associating with celebrities, or engaging in publicity stunts. Rather, what this chapter is describing is a convergence of forms of political and mediated (electronic) communication. As Drake and Higgins (2012) have argued, political celebritization is constructed dramatically in TV performances that resonate with their audience.

It is in the light of this analysis that I now want to revisit, briefly, an earlier example of the same phenomenon. This is a film shown as a party election broadcast from 1997, featuring Tony Blair, that I have previously analyzed (Tolson 2006: ch. 4). I have since learned that this film was made by Molly Dineen, who also made the film about Geri Halliwell (Tolson 2001) and it demonstrates her trademark “televsual” style. The film has a type of candid camerawork, in which Blair is filmed at home with his children, as well as being interviewed on the move, in a car. The interview is “conversational,” partly because Dineen’s voice, asking questions, can be heard; but also because Blair talks in a way that seems unscripted, with pauses, false starts, repetitions and some use of colloquial language. The film starts with Blair saying that when he was young he thought “politicians were a complete pain in the backside” and that he really wanted to play football for Newcastle United – but on that basis (i.e., a youthful distance from old politics) he now wants to articulate something new: “I think my generation is trying to get to a different type of politics which is rooted in strong values and convictions (.) but it’s not quite left and right in the way that it’s been before ...” Shortly after this comes the fully fledged rhetoric of change:

Shot of Blair in his kitchen (medium close-up)

There just a sense in which I just feel (.) hh people have got to understand things can change I mean it’s just so (.) daft to think they couldn’t be better (.) I mean they could be better if you just decided on a – even if you just decided right the education system let’s say education and welfare were going to be the only things you’d worry about and everything else would stay the same even

Cut to clip from party conference speech

Ask me my three main priorities for government and I tell you education, education and education

Shot of Blair in car (big close-up)

The job of a politician is to change the country in a way that you feel is right for the country. I mean it’s – there’s no point in being in it unless you want to change things. If all you want to do is do the job sit in an office behind a desk and sign the papers there’s not much point in doing it. But it’s like anything you know it’s like what we did with the Labour Party. We had a clear sense of objectives to modernize the Labour Party bring it up to date and we’ve got to do the same with the country and it can be done ...

In my previous analysis of this film I concentrated on the forms of talk Blair is using to come across as an “ordinary person.” Again the extract above provides

several examples of his apparently unscripted and colloquial speech (pauses, false starts, etc.) that we would associate with an “off duty” role. There is also some use of “sympathetic circularity” (“I mean,” “you know,” and the generalized “you”) that presents that speech as if it is part of an interpersonal exchange. This “off duty” Blair is contrasted with Dineen’s cut to him performing as a politician in the conference setting. But now it also seems clear to me that this film is using such “ordinary” informality to authenticate its message about a new kind of politics with its promise of “change.” Of course the rhetoric of novelty was built into the whole “New Labour” brand. As such it was part of an elaborate public relations and marketing strategy (expertly analyzed by Norman Fairclough (2000)). But once again the main point is that this brand is “personalized” in the context of an effective (for its time and of its type) television performance. And as for its “celebrity value,” those of us who watched election night in 1997 will not forget the New Labour victory party, carefully choreographed to the strains of D:ream’s “Things can only get better.”

Conclusion: The Politics of “Trust” Revisited

However there is also an instability, even a certain level of rhetorical contradiction, inherent in this form of political “celebrity value.” If it is, on the one hand, a basis for temporary “celebritization,” it is also in the longer term, and when examined critically, a rhetoric of implausible aspiration. In the case of Nick Clegg, this contradiction was encapsulated in a poster that appeared on the internet after his triumph in the first party leader debate. This was a pastiche of the famous pop art poster featuring President Obama with his face anchored by the word “Hope.” Here Clegg’s face was substituted for Obama’s in an otherwise identical image (figure 9.1). That this was intended to be ironic there is no doubt, since it was created by Steve Caplin, who according to his website “specializes in satirical photomontage.” And this is how it was treated by journalists – where the question “is Nick Clegg the British Barack Obama?” was answered by “perhaps this is just another way of saying he is the new Tim Henman” (Oliver Burkeman in the *Guardian*, April 19, 2010) – in other words, a likable loser.

However a more serious point might be to emphasize the key differences between Clegg and Obama in their forms of political celebrity. For if, according to Douglas Kellner (2009, and his chapter in this volume), Obama was projected through a “celebrity spectacle” from which he emerged as “the world’s major global celebrity bar none” (2009: 736), Clegg’s triumph, as we have seen, was based on convincing ways of being “ordinary” on British television. Again there appear to be different kinds of political celebrity constructed through different forms of mediation (and for Obama, forms of online engagement were critical – see Lorenzo-Dus and Garcés-Conejos Blitvitch 2013). To refer back to Marshall’s typology: if the celebrity politician functions in the intersection of the star, mass entertainer, and TV personality, then Obama was much more at the former end of the spectrum than Clegg, who was rooted in the latter.



Figure 9.1 Clegg Obama

In this context, the poster wittily encapsulates the critical contradiction in the type of “celebrity value” we are considering here. On the one hand it offers change, in promises of difference and “hope,” but on the other hand it articulates this through “being ordinary.” The critical point of the poster is that Clegg is precisely not an Obama; here it is not the individual with exceptional “star” quality who offers us hope, but rather the personality “lowered to our level,” just like ourselves. In this respect, perhaps Clegg offered the kind of politics previously personified, according to Meyrowitz, by Jimmy Carter, who brought to the US presidency “the image and position of an outsider” (1985: 279). This is the paradox of a politician who distrusts politicians, whose credibility is based on his not being like the others, or who thought, in his youth, that all politicians were a “pain in the backside.” Meyrowitz produces an interesting list of Carter’s efforts to make the presidency ordinary, including “a live call-in television show to answer questions from ‘the people’” (1985: 299). In his election campaign: “His message all over the country was nearly the same. Of necessity it was not much of a message, but it was relatively consistent and persistent. Basically he said ‘Just trust me.’”

Surely, this is the fallacy that Sennett critiques in *The Fall of Public Man*. It is not necessary to endorse his sweeping history of modernity to recognize that what was reproduced in the mediated performances of Clegg, Blair, and Carter is a distinctive and contemporary form of political celebrity where “personality” (as performed on TV) is the guarantee of change. It is also not difficult to see how, in this discursive formation, the question of “trust” in politicians becomes critical. For it is not that politicians are necessarily crooks, or that they inevitably break their promises

(though Clegg was guilty of this when, in the coalition government, he acceded to the rise in university tuition fees). Nor is the problem of trust in politicians only an effect of journalistic skepticism in political reporting, as I have argued elsewhere (Tolson 2011). Rather, in the present analysis, trust is an issue because it is foregrounded in a type of political celebrity produced through mediated performances which cannot, of themselves, bring about the changes they promise to deliver. Indeed the more “ordinary” the politician, as Meyrowitz argues of Carter, the less likely he is to deliver anything! In this discourse, “hope springs eternal” because it is talked up in the media performance, but subsequent disillusionment then becomes inevitable, with both “celebrity politicians” and with politics in general.

Notes

- 1 Jedward is a singing duo from Dublin who rose to fame in the UK through their performances in the 2009 series of the *X Factor* television show. Having finished sixth in the series their subsequent celebrity was inflected with an element of irony.
- 2 Here, the term “rhetoric” is used simply to emphasize the fact that Clegg is making a rhetorical argument. Of course there are more technical approaches to the study of rhetoric ranging from the identification of classical ‘tropes’ to the forms of “claptrap” analyzed by Max Atkinson (1984). However, here the term is used to offer a comment, rather than a formal analysis.

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Winning Isn't Everything. Selling Is *Sports, Advertising, and the Logic of the Market*

Ellis Cashmore

The New Sex

Some activities shouldn't, by the laws of nature (if they existed), exist. Sports, for example, ought to disappear once we realize how valueless they are. Sport does hardly anything to help save the planet, bring peace on earth, or find cures for any of the diseases that afflict humanity. It simply pits humans together in literally futile contests that prove nothing apart from the superior abilities of one human being, or group of human beings, to execute (again, futile) tasks. Sport is based entirely on paradox, like one of those 3D printed guns, which you think will never work, but which somehow fires bullets. Sport should not be important; we *make* it important.

For over 150 years, consumers have been drawn to the spectacle offered by sports: whether by the slow, Chekhov-like deliberations of test cricket or the blur of a 100 meter sprint, which is over in an eye blink. The longevity and robustness of fans' attachment reminds us that value is, like beauty, in the eye of the beholder: practices that are objectively worthless and perhaps even senseless have been rendered precious.

Today we attach more value to these unproductive activities than at any time in history. Practitioners vie with Hollywood actors, rock stars and other popular entertainers. Certainly, their earnings and status are on par with fellow celebrities. They are among the most visible people in the world. Forty years ago, it would have been an insult to call a boxer or a football player a celebrity. Athletes were not trying to entertain spectators: they were trying to win contests in competitive environments. What entertainment ensued was a by-product in the sense that fans enjoyed watching. But to compare athletes with singers, actors or – perish the thought – supermodels would have been borderline defamatory.

Rubbing shoulders with Hollywood stars or pop singers was strictly for athletes whose aspirations extended beyond sport. When he was still known as Cassius Clay,

in 1964, Muhammad Ali famously met the Beatles. Ali, probably more than any other athlete in history, was conscious of his persona: "The Beatles wanted *my* autograph," he once declared. Ali was a singular athlete; in his (and possibly any other) time, unique.

A couple of Ali's contemporaries, Joe Namath (b. 1943) of the New York Jets, and George Best (1946–2005) of Manchester United and other clubs, were playboy athletes in the 1960s. Indistinguishable from pop stars in appearance, Namath and Best led uncannily parallel, indulgent lives of excessive drinking and prodigious womanizing. They were square pegs in round holes. Today, their exploits would be expected from well-paid celebrity athletes with hedonistic inclinations. The 1960s contrived a different environment, one in which sportsmen played sport and reporters reported how they performed on the field, rather than in bars and clubs.

It was a half-century ago, though it seems as far away as Charles Dickens's London. Now it seems any athlete with a recognized level of proficiency is competing on and off the sports field: for spots on TV shows, a newspaper column, and of course, lucrative endorsement contracts, which may be a crude but serviceable index of celebrity status. Endorsements also offer a recording device for the changes in rank, standing or stature of prominent athletes. Another index is a signature eau de cologne.

Anyone with a degree of visibility in or out of sports is sure to be offered the opportunity to lend their name and image to a product or two. What was once a supplementary stipend is now the main source of the highest earning athletes' incomes. Salaries, prize money and match fees are now the bonus payments: advertising brings in the serious money. The top six earners in sport derive, on average, 80 percent of their money from advertising, or related marketing activities, such as licensing their names. Nine of out every ten dollars Tiger Woods earned during his peak years came from endorsements (including a few cents from his fragrance, of course). Same with Phil Mickelson, the golfer. Roger Federer also had a remunerative endorsement portfolio, with nine companies, including Nike, Rolex, Mercedes Benz and Credit Suisse, collectively paying him more than \$30 million (£22 million) annually. Federer also has his own fragrance.

Like other familiar celebrities known for something other than contemptibly shameful conduct, the sportsmen had advertisers chasing them. When Woods was disgraced, some advertisers with which he had contracts invoked an escape clause, while others, including Nike, stuck with him. But before the 1980s, conformity to conventionally accepted standards of behavior or morals was a necessary condition for anyone in the public purview with an interest in earning a little extra from advertising. In the mid-twentieth century homosexuality was regarded as transgressive and any form of impropriety was given a wide berth. Being gay would have nullified any chance Rock Hudson (1925–85) had of securing endorsements and, for that matter, any leading film part. In fact, Hudson's sexual orientation was a tightly held secret for most of his career, permitting him to advertise cigarettes. He died of an AIDS-related illness. Gregory Peck and Claudette Colbert were among the many other Hollywood stars who advertised products. Makers of soft and alcoholic drinks were also keen on actors to provide their advertising with a personal focus. Unlike rock stars of the mid-twentieth century, these actors were less liable to cross moral

boundaries by getting into drugs or groupies. When they did, only the cognoscenti knew of their errant behavior: the Hollywood machine made sure of that.

Hollywood stars were perfect for advertising: in addition to their conspicuousness, they had glamour. This made them models for aspirational consumers. As Nigel Thrift clarifies: "The glamorous persona is often associated with high-end fashion. It involves a combination of sex appeal, luxury, celebrity, and wealth" (2008: 18).

Lack of glamour wouldn't have deterred advertisers of beer, razors and certain brands of cigarettes with a blue-collar sensibility – in other words, the kinds of products used by sports fans. A product like General Mills's breakfast cereal Wheaties had a potential market that spanned many demographics. Over the years, its advertising agency contracted all manner of sportsmen and, actually, women – Babe Didrikson (1914–56) and Mary Lou Retton, for example – for its publicity and marketing. Sam Snead (1912–2002), Jack Dempsey (1895–1983) and Johnny Weissmuller (1904–84) all had Wheaties contracts, as did Joe DiMaggio (1914–99), who almost became glamorous by association when he married Marilyn Monroe in 1954 (the marriage lasted 274 days, probably making him seem even more glamorous).

Timex watches discovered a market among sports fans: the company ran ads featuring, among others, heavyweight boxing champion Rocky Marciano (1923–69) and Mickey Mantle (1931–95), the New York Yankees baseball player. Wristwatches have a kind of sports aesthetic. British cricketer and football player Denis Compton (1918–97) fronted a campaign for Brylcreem hair product, also endorsed in the 1990s by David Beckham. While it sounds odd today, golfer Ben Hogan (1912–97) was a pitchman for cigarettes as well as golf equipment.

But notice what all the notable sports stars mentioned so far have in common: they were, or are white. African-American heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis (1914–81) featured in cigarette ads and promoted Buick cars: in defeating the German boxer Max Schmeling in 1938, Louis prefigured the Allies' victory over Nazism and hence became a nationalistic symbol. Jackie Robinson (1919–72) endorsed a soft drink called Cremo in the 1940s. Robinson was the first black baseball player in the major leagues. They were exceptional athletes, but figures of social significance too, which is probably why they were able to attract advertisers. But few African-Americans entertainers and athletes had advertising deals. Black people were over-represented among the lowest socioeconomic classes and, as such, had limited disposable income. It was not until the 1980s that advertisers woke up to the prospect of a newly affluent black bourgeoisie who could be turned into a promising market for consumer goods.

"The essence of an endorsement strategy consists of creating an emotional tie between the consumer and the athletes, thus increasing both brand and product awareness and improving the image of the company," write George Stone et al. (2003: 95–100). It's a naive way of interpreting endorsements: the "essence" is not so much to create a so-called "emotional tie" as to induce consumers to buy products. But the second point about "improving the image of the company" is worth considering: the very nature of sports made using sport prohibitive. Titles were lost as well as won, competitors turned from heroes to villains, the vicissitudes of competition made athletes unreliable endorsers.

And then something happened: sports replaced sex. At least according to Donald Katz, who reflects that in the early 1990s: "Sports had arguably surpassed popular music as the captivating medium most essential to being perceived as 'young and alive.' Katz goes further: "Sports, as never before, had so completely permeated the logic of the marketplace in consumer goods that by 1992 the psychological content of selling was often more sports-oriented than it was sexual" (1994: 25–6).

I presume Katz means that the set of principles underlying and guiding sports began to inform advertising and marketing: clean, wholesome, rule-governed competition; healthy, young, like-minded individuals dedicated to the pursuit of excellence through hard work, honest endeavor and an insatiable appetite for success; a lifestyle conducive to the promotion of good health and moral wellbeing. Sports appeared a positive force. About that, everyone was agreed. So why not use the consensus to sell stuff? The products need not have any genuine connection with sports; that's where the creativity of advertising enters: linking products as diverse as deodorants, alcoholic beverages and cars with sports. Advertisers can forge these kinds of links in their sleep. Remind yourself of this when you next notice a sports figure advertising a product. Ask: what has this product got to do with sports?

Katz may be right, though he doesn't explain why sports figures and the connotations they brought to advertising became so popular at the turn of the 1990s. One reason was that the tried-and-tested Hollywood stars were becoming less reliable. Elizabeth Taylor had serenely navigated a passage through the waters roiled by her *affaire de coeur* in the early 1960s. She endorsed chocolates, shampoo, soap and a range of Elizabeth Arden fragrances. Her contemporary Jane Fonda (b. 1937; Taylor was born in 1932) had a different kind of scandal when, in 1972, she visited Hanoi in the midst of the Vietnam War. In addition to being photographed on a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft battery, she later repeated North Vietnam propaganda, by calling returning prisoners of war liars for claiming they had been starved, tortured and brainwashed. Advertisers cautiously avoided using her. Yet in the 1980s, Fonda emerged as a symbol of fitness culture. And in the 2000s, she endorsed L'Oréal products, suggesting a complete rehabilitation of her public image.

Scandals were never alluring to advertisers, especially if they involved sex or politics. Drugs scandals were not prevalent enough to make much difference. Robert Mitchum's minor scrape in 1948 was hushed up. But by the 1980s, there were warning signs. John Belushi died in 1982 at the age of 33 after shooting up a speedball of cocaine and heroin. Dennis Quaid made his addiction to cocaine in the 1980s known, revealing that the drug was widely used in the film industry. Robert Downey Jr was another actor with drug dependency: he was arrested on several occasions in the 1990s. In 1989, Rob Lowe, then 22, was at the center of a sex tape scandal involving two teenage women, one 16 and so underage. There were other cases that escaped the formerly reliable machine, suggesting either more stars engaging in deviant behavior; or, more likely, Hollywood could no longer prevent stories of such behavior reaching the light of day. Either way, advertisers were wary: would a major car company want its commercials voiced-over by a recognizable actor who had been imprisoned for drugs violations? (Actually, a rehabilitated Downey, in 2010, signed with Nissan to voice its Leaf commercials (Rudolf 2013).)

With Hollywood actors losing their previously unquestioned dependability, advertisers were obliged to exercise more caution in their choice of endorsers. They could have turned to narrative-driven ads, but publicly known figures were especially effective in a market that was rapidly segmenting and difficult to target. Hollywood stars were well known to all, particularly the most desirable white demographic of 18–49 years old. Think about the qualities that make some figures effective endorsers: consumers need to identify with them, in the sense that they can recognize and associate closely with the person, and believe they share characteristics with that person, or at least what they know of the person. But they also have to attribute credibility to that person. In other words, the endorser has to be capable of persuading consumers that something is a good thing. So advertisers searched for people consumers would trust.

Sports figures were not perfectly trustworthy. In 1988, sprinter Ben Johnson was sent home from the Seoul Olympic Games after winning the 100 meters in record time but then failing a dope test. It was, at the time, the greatest scandal in sports history and cast a shadow across not simply track, but the entire landscape of sports. Six years later, the figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was physically attacked by the ex-husband and bodyguard of one of her Olympic rivals, Tonya Harding. Between the two cases, there was the Mike Tyson rape trial. No one could have believed sport was inhabited by doe-eyed innocents capable only of acts of heroism. But Johnson and the other miscreants were dramatically anomalous characters who made headlines around the world. In sports terms, they were Other: figures who were distinct from, or opposite to sports competitors. Their distinctness served as a reminder of what sports *was not*. Johnson in particular was depicted as a model of everything iniquitous, depraved and degenerate in sport. So who was the model of everything admirable, praiseworthy, virtuous, and excellent?

Michael Jordan in “a drug-infested, too-black league”

Nike has, for decades, been a purveyor of easy-on-the-conscience representations of the black urban experience to the middlebrow masses. In 1985, after eight years of steady growth and increasing profits, the sports goods company reported two consecutive losing quarters. Competitors, such as Adidas, Puma and, especially, Reebok were taking advantage of the enthusiasm for aerobics, which Nike had missed. Nike's marketing strategy was to use established sports figures to endorse its products. So, when it signed Michael Jordan, there was a risk: he was, like the majority of other players in the National Basketball Association, black and, at that stage, unproven in the pro ranks. The NBA itself had an image problem: it was widely regarded as, to quote Edward Kiersh in the *Los Angeles Times* magazine, “a drug-infested, too-black league” (1992). Its players were, to use Tyrone R. Simpson's arresting phrase, “excessively libidinal, terminally criminal, and socially infernal” (2002). This had commercial implications summed up by Kiersh: “Sponsors felt the NBA and its black stars had little value in pitching colas and cornflakes to Middle America” (1992). Nike

used Jordan primarily as a sales instrument: his role was to move branded footwear and apparel.

David Halberstam points out that, in 1984, Nike had revenues of \$919 million and a net income of about \$40 million, and by the end of 1997, the company's revenues were \$9 billion, with a net of around \$800 million (1999: 412–13). Jordan had made about \$130 million from Nike during the previous ten years. In a 1998 issue of *Fortune* magazine, Roy Johnson analyzed what he called the “Jordan effect,” meaning Jordan's impact on the overall US economy. The Air Jordan line was worth, in sales, \$5.2 billion (about £3.2 billion). For that, you could buy Manchester United, Dallas Cowboys, New York Yankees, and still have enough change to snap up Jordan's own club from 1984 to 1998, the Chicago Bulls. But the overall value of Jordan-related sales over a 14-year period from 1984 was even more: \$10 billion (£6.16 billion). Jordan, almost inevitably, has his own fragrance.

The sales figures alone are impressive, but, in the marketing process, something more impressive happened: Jordan was presented as an “atypical Black figure,” as David L. Andrews and Michael L. Silk call him, “distanced, from the discourses of irresponsibility, hypersexuality, deviance, unruliness, and brutish physicality routinely associated with African American males in general, and NBA players in particular” (2010: 1629).

Prominent black athletes had a reputation for being unpredictable. Magic Johnson (b. 1959), who played for the Lakers from 1979, was diagnosed HIV-positive shortly before being selected to play for the US basketball team that won a gold medal at the 1992 Olympic Games. Mike Tyson (b. 1966) won the first of his world boxing titles in 1986; in 1992 he was convicted of rape. So, when Nike first signed up Jordan in 1984, there were questions. Would an African American with little profile beyond the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) and no experience in the pro ranks become popular enough to move sports shoes? Would he self-combust and wind up involved in some kind of shame-inducing episode? The answers were, of course: yes and no.

The NBA in the 1990s became a one-man show that other players were allowed to crash. Jordan was like air, or, I should say, Air: he was everywhere, all the time. There was no escape from his image, whether on TV, movies, cereal boxes, posters, you name it. It was as if he was a palpable presence. All most people saw was a representation, usually in the context of advertising. Even when not advertising Nike products, Jordan's image appeared in advertising for other companies, such as Coca-Cola, General Mills. Wilson, McDonald's, Sara Lee, Upper Deck, WorldCom, CBS SportsLine (website), Quaker Oats (Gatorade), Oakley (sunglasses) and Rayovac. Yet, there was a sense in which people not only liked him, but felt they knew this crisply wholesome, indubitably clean-living and utterly harmless dark-skinned, but not dark man.

Nowadays, commercial companies seem to be able to create salable celebrities by pushing buttons. But in the late 1980s, there was no surefire way, and, given the historical suspicions about black sportsmen in general and the NBA in particular, Nike's contract was less an investment, more a gamble. But one that paid off, of course. “It was Nike's commercials that made Jordan a global superstar,” Naomi Klein suspects

(2000: 52). There had been other gifted athletes before Jordan, though none reached what Klein calls "Jordan's other-worldly level of fame."

Klein isn't questioning Jordan's basketball prowess. But, pre-Jordan, sports stars, no matter how good or great, were athletes who happened to do advertising. They weren't synonymous with a brand, as Jordan was. Nike changed all that: the company embarked on what Klein calls "mythmaking," creating an aura around Jordan. "Who said man wasn't meant to fly?" asked one of the early ads, showing the apparently gravity-defying Jordan. The other-worldliness translated smoothly into sales. So, while other figures, such as Jesus, Che Guevara, Marilyn Monroe and Muhammad Ali were icons, none was manufactured as such. Jordan was. His iconic status was designed to sell Nike goods. But somewhere in the manufacturing process, Jordan came to symbolize a new version of blackness, what Helán E. Page, in 1997, called "embraceable male blackness," something with which whites would feel safe.

"When we view black men in our media, their representations generally fall into two reductive, disparate categories," revealed Ed Guerrero in 1995 (by reductive, he means presented in a simplified form). "On the one hand, we are treated to the grand celebrity spectacle of black male athletes, movie stars, and pop entertainers ... conspicuously enjoying the wealth and privilege that fuel the ordinary citizen's material fantasies." On the other, "we are also subjected to the real-time devastation, slaughter, and body count of a steady stream of faceless black males on the 6 and 11 o'clock news" (1995: 183). Guerrero named Jordan, along with Michael Jackson and Bill Cosby, as personifications of the former category. Jackson had, in 1993, been accused of making "sexual offensive contacts" with a 13-year-old boy. Cosby was 58 when Guerrero wrote. Jordan, at 32, was a more apposite reflection of the "grand celebrity spectacle" category.

When Thomas Oates and Judy Polumbaum observe, "Jordan was able to escape both the patronizing and demonizing extremes often associated with black athletes," they miss the point (2004: 196). He didn't "escape" them: he rendered them irrelevant. Here was a black man with none of the usual faults habitually associated with black men, in fact no faults at all. He didn't talk politics and his comments about the condition of black people were anodyne. Rasheed Z. Baaith condensed Jordan's philosophy thus: "Get the money, don't say anything substantial and, for heaven's sake, never offend white people" (2002).

Nike didn't want Jordan to upset anybody. That was the whole point: his embraceable quality was intended to be good for all groups, male and female, black and white, old and young. For Dylan A. T. Miner, Jordan, or rather the brand he personified, "represented the commodification of blackness to a globalizing marketplace" (2009: 92). At a time when black athletes predominated not just in basketball, but many other major sports, most of the recognizable faces were white. Black athletes were not typically inundated with endorsement offers; more usually they were regarded with suspicion. Jordan was a different type of black athlete.

No figure in history had moved so much merchandise as Jordan. While often described as an icon, it's worth remembering that icons are usually regarded as representative symbols of something: manhood, for example, or freedom, or a new era, and so on. What did Jordan symbolize?

Jordan was a living human being, a flawed mortal who played basketball for the Lakers, and, according to a 1992 book by Sam Smith, demanded special treatment at the expense of his teammates and had an unseemly gambling habit (Jordan admitted he'd written a check for \$57,000 in settlement of a gambling debt). Jordan was also a fantasy: he lived in the minds of the countless acolytes who believed they knew him. This was the Jordan of the imagination. It was the Jordan Nike made and sold – just like a commodity. Jordan was not just the cynosure of 1990s sports, but the first truly modern sports celebrity.

Brand Beckham: Like Soap Powder

The idea of affixing the name of an athlete to a product seems ridiculously obvious nowadays. It's hardly possible to get through a day without seeing some football or baseball player citing the benefits of something or other (Pelé's approval for Viagra was noteworthy, if only because he insisted he didn't need to take the product) (BBC 2002). Yet, as we've seen, prior to the 1980s sports stars were recruited only sporadically to lend their support to products: they had almost oddity value. Why did athletes suddenly become ubiquitous after Jordan?

Jordan himself is a big part of the answer. He introduced the quality that was missing from earlier athletes – glamour. Jordan possessed, to repeat Thrift, "a combination of sex appeal, luxury, celebrity, and wealth." Correction: consumers attributed these qualities to Jordan. It's what we ascribe to figures, not what they actually have, that influences how we respond to them. After Nike's sales of Air Jordan surged, advertisers took note: prominent athletes were known largely for their competitive prowess. In itself, this might pique interest; it might even convince consumers that a certain athlete's choice of razors, or wristwatch, was a reliable guide for future purchases. But what if an athlete could be turned into a thing of wonder? An exquisitely decorated body with gilded ornamentation that could perform daring feats on the field of play, strut at fashion shows and pout at cameras.

The February 14, 2000 edition of *Sports Illustrated* bore a cover picture of Jordan wearing a T-shirt (Nike, naturally) with the legend WIZARDS. Strapped across the image was "Boss Jordan: How good will he be?" Jordan, then 37, had just bought the Washington Wizards basketball club and was about to start the final phase of his active playing career; he played for the Wizards until 2003. By this time, many outstanding basketball players had established themselves, not just on court but as all-purpose celebrities. Shaquille O'Neal had made records and appeared in movies as well as playing ball. Kobe Bryant was also emerging. The golfer Tiger Woods was in the fourth of a five-year deal with Nike. Neither Bryant nor Woods had, at this stage, been involved in the scandals that would, in a perverse way, define their careers. It could be argued that none of these had Jordan's aura, that is, the distinct atmosphere that surrounded him. Walter Benjamin writes about aura in his canonical essay "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction." He draws attention to the possessor being inaccessible and elusive, highly valued but deceptively out of reach. The aura, according to Benjamin is a "strange web of space and time" (1970: 220). It seems

to fit Jordan perfectly. But we shouldn't forget: Nike created the conditions under which it was possible for the distinctive quality that seemed to surround Jordan to appear. His fans and followers made that aura discernible. There is some truth in this. Jordan surfaced at a particular moment in history and was the first figure of his kind; there could never be an exact equivalent. The latter-day celebrity athletes weren't lesser beings or epigones; they just weren't the first.

Meanwhile in Manchester, England, David Beckham was ruffling the feathers of his club manager, Alex Ferguson. Married in 1999 to the then Victoria Adams alias Posh Spice, Beckham combined his spectacularly successful sports career with an even more spectacular career in modeling, advertising and sundry other activities, including attending premieres and accompanying his pop star wife to fashion shows where he consorted with her designer friends. Ferguson, an old school manager, made it clear he regarded Beckham's extracurricular activities as unnecessary distractions. Those activities resulted largely from a bulging portfolio of contracts with global brands such as Adidas, PepsiCo, and Police eyewear.

By the time Beckham met his future wife in 1997, the Spice Girls had already released four global hit singles and an album, *Spice*, that had then sold 10 million copies (and would eventually sell 28 million). Yet the band hadn't even been on a concert tour. Victoria had also announced her career intentions: "Right from the beginning I said I wanted to be as famous as Persil Automatic" (Britain's best-selling detergent) (Beckham 2005). Some – including this writer – suspected that Victoria, well versed in the art of celebrity-making, stealthily put Beckham together with her own manager Simon Fuller, whose 19 agency was focused at the time on showbiz rather than sports figures (Lewis Hamilton and Andy Murray were among the athletes who signed with 19 later). Acclaimed in Europe and Asia, Beckham was in 2000 still relatively unknown in the US. The movie *Bend It Like Beckham*, in which he didn't appear but which had the effect of promulgating his name, wasn't released until 2002. When he transferred from Manchester to Real Madrid in 2003, however, the name Beckham had global resonance. Whether swigging Pepsi or preening behind shades, his seemingly self-replicating image was, it seemed, inescapable. It was around this time that the term Brand Beckham was insinuated into the popular vocabulary. The object of Brand Beckham was – we can only presume because this was never publicly stated – to create a multipurpose word and accompanying image capable of adding market value to any conceivable product that was available for purchase. And the market was wide: right from felt tip markers selling for less than the price of a copy of *Vogue* to the kind of clothes that would grace the front cover of that magazine's September issue. Cologne (of course), underwear, motor engine oil and a miscellany of other items were all marketed in the name of Beckham.

In terms of calculation, ambition and brazenness, Brand Beckham was equal to anything dreamt up by Phil Knight when he first signed Jordan to Nike. The contrasts are revealing: Jordan was marketed as a sports genius, a freak – and I mean a very unusual figure, rather than someone with a striking physical abnormality, though Nike pushed his gravity-defying superpowers. It was commonly considered that his inspiration arrived easily and his perfect execution on court casually slipped into place. By contrast Beckham was promoted like an uncommunicative pop artist:

before he moved to Madrid, he barely gave interviews, and was never seen in public, apart from on game days or at red carpet events. His detractors too often overlooked this attention to detail, but it helped create and perpetuate a Beckham mystique, a fascinating and glamorous aura of mystery. There's that quality again: aura. The air of secrecy surrounding Beckham wouldn't have been of any consequence if no one was interested. But millions were enticed by the inaccessible and unapproachable yet dashing figure whose every move, it seemed, was carefully planned and monitored.

The comparisons between Beckham and Jordan were underlined by Beckham himself when he insisted on the same number 23 Jordan wore at the Bulls for his own Real Madrid shirt (and later on his LA Galaxy shirt). But Jordan was undeniably the best basketball player of his – and, for many, any other – generation. No one ever rated even peak-form Beckham in the world's top 20, perhaps not even top 50 players. The transfer fee Real Madrid paid for his services, €35 million (\$45 million/£28 million), reflected his brand value more than his athletic proficiency (in soccer, players are traded for money rather than exchanged for other players or draft picks). “Real Madrid's commercial revenue from club merchandise sales, such as replica shirts, increased 67% in Beckham's first season alone,” advise John Vincent et al., “The acquisition of Beckham also helped open up new markets in Asia and the United States [and] helped propel Real Madrid past Beckham's former club Manchester United as the world's richest club in 2004” (2009: 175).

No one could accuse Brand Beckham of selling itself cheaply: in 2004, Gillette offered David Beckham an estimated £40 million (\$65 million) to front a world-wide campaign for a new razor (Macmillan 2004). There was a backstory to the deal: shortly before, the clean-living family man who radiated health and well-being, was reported to have been having an affair with Rebecca Loos, who worked for his former agency. Beckham himself said nothing, though Loos was generous in confessing all to the media. In 2011, a former *News of the World* chief reporter revealed Loos was paid around £1 million for details of her alleged affair with Beckham. For a while, she became a celebrity in her own right, as befits a woman who claims to have had sex with one of the world's most lusted-after men. Doomsayers who predicted the end of Brand Beckham clearly misunderstood the chemistry of celebrity culture. Far from ruining the brand, the scandal heightened interest in it: no longer the too-good-to-be-true model of piety, David Beckham was just another guy after all. He would succumb to temptation just like anybody else. The hitherto angelic image now had a dash of devilry. As we know, consumers like celebrities to be less godlike, more human.

Sales of the M3 Power razor Beckham endorsed spiked by 13 percent in the year following the start of his contract, suggesting the efficacy of the brand. (BBC 2006). Further deals with global brands Armani and Vodafone followed, leading even skeptics to assume Beckham could sell anything. That included association football, a game played all over the world, including the US where it is a very poor relation to baseball, basketball, football and hockey and is known as soccer (the word was once used in England and is an outgrowth of the abbreviation “assoc,” i.e. short for association).

Presumably, this was Philip Anschutz's reasoning when he offered Beckham what seemed a catastrophic amount of money to move from Madrid to Los Angeles to play for LA Galaxy, a club owned by Anschutz's company AEG. Anschutz (net worth \$7 billion) was a founding investor of Major League Soccer (MLS), the league in which LA Galaxy competed. AEG also owns the Houston Dynamo club and at various times during the history of MLS has held ownership in the Chicago Fire, San Jose Earthquakes, New York/New Jersey MetroStars and D.C. United. Hence Anschutz had a heavily vested interest in promoting soccer in America. Beckham's five-year deal, starting 2007, was thought to be worth \$207 million, or £128 million (BBC 2007).

By the end of his first contract with LA Galaxy, Major League Soccer was feeling the effects of Brand Beckham: the league, which once had to pay broadcasters to air its games, had signed a \$30 million, three-year deal with NBC, supplementing agreements it already had with ESPN, Fox, and Univision; and LA Galaxy agreed to a deal with Time Warner Cable worth \$55 million over ten years. Attendances grew, year on year. Even so, the outlay on Beckham and other marquee players from outside the US made it impossible for MLS to turn a profit, and in 2012 Beckham left the league only marginally better off than when he'd arrived.

Authentic Sharapova

The cases of Jordan and Beckham should prod us into wondering: are athletes different from popular entertainers – including reality TV stars – who, most of us assume, are reacting spontaneously to forces all around them, cashing in on their ability to monitor their times? Athletes are not Johnny-come-lately arrivals: they've been doing the same things for decades, kicking or throwing balls, hitting each other, running around tracks and so on. We can't help but imagine that today's celebrity athletes closely resemble yesterday's sports stars; in fact, we don't have to imagine when we see so much archival footage on TV.

Where there were once "colorful characters" or superstars, there are now celebrity athletes, or icons — images created by corporate interests for the purpose of selling in a market that respects no national boundaries – that are capable of being monetized, that is, converted into a form of currency. In this vital respect, they are closer to show-business entertainers than athletes. Corporations like Adidas and Armani waste no time in co-opting young men and women into their grand projects, determining their value separately from their competitive accomplishments. Celebrity athletes are given the same kind of treatment as any other kind of celebrity: they're turned into commodities and made to function as marketing vehicles. They rarely, if ever, resist. Is it so demeaning to display your D-Star automatic chronograph if Rado are paying you a seven-figure sum to be their "brand ambassador" (to use the preferred euphemism for endorser)? Nicole Kidman's dignity didn't suffer by wearing an Omega watch, nor did Daniel Craig's. Athletes have been absorbed into celebrity culture just like entertainers. Or have they?

Barry Smart (2005) thinks not: it is impossible to "subordinate the ethos of sport to values of entertainment and commerce." By ethos, Smart means the characteristic

spirit of sports, as manifested in its principles and the aspirations of its competitors. Athletes are not just performers who work to amuse audiences: their task is primarily to win and this is not necessarily related to entertaining at all. Unlike other celebrities, especially those whose transitory fame comes via reality TV, sports stars have “authenticity.” This is a term Smart uses to stake out the difference between athletes and all other celebrities. He means that, in order to become known, they must first demonstrate competence, if not excellence in their sport. There are, occasionally, lamentably inept athletes at major tournaments who are widely publicized for their gameness. But their time in the sun is usually short and, for the most part, athletes who rise to global fame “confirm the authenticity of their exceptional status, their significant difference, if not their uniqueness” (2005: 195).

Smart isn’t so dazzled by this that he doesn’t recognize that: “Since the 1960s a series of economic and cultural processes have transformed the world of sport” (2005: 18). The “threat” posed to authenticity – “a vulnerable quality,” he reckons – by commercial interests is apparent everywhere. And yet: “The authenticity of sporting figures like Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods and David Beckham ultimately derives from the quality of their playing performance, from their records of success in competition” (2005: 195).

Authenticity is one of those words that create an illusion: it looks like a simile for genuineness or legitimacy, whereas it hides a transaction. “Authenticity is a tricky concept,” concluded Deborah Root in a different context. “The term can be manipulated and used to convince people they are getting something profound when they are just getting merchandise” (1996: 78). Root wasn’t writing about sport, though her argument travels well. When she refers to a “commodification of authenticity,” she could be referring to the way in which various areas of the culture industry work to turn playing skills into “pure artistry,” “natural talent,” or even “genius.” These are terms to which sports fans have become accustomed. Undeniably, there are athletes who have convinced everyone they possess them: ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky, Michael Schumacher and Roger Federer are among an elite group of sportsmen who utterly dominated their particular sports for unfeasibly long periods. Their achievements are a matter of record and defy contrary arguments.

Every branch of entertainment boasts incomparable artists with incomparable talent. It forces us to confront a question we have raised before: is talent inherent or is it ascribed? The conventional view is that talent is a natural aptitude or skill, something people are gifted with at birth. I suggested a more elliptic conception, understanding talent from contextual clues: talent is whatever we agree to call talent. It’s a matter of convention that we agree that the capacity to hit tennis balls with a racket with great force and great accuracy constitutes a talent. Or an adeptness at playing scripted roles with persuasive conviction; or a skill in playing musical instruments or singing in a way that others enjoy. Time changes contexts, of course: we don’t find many talented lute players nowadays. Talent, from this perspective, is something audiences credit; an acknowledgment of uncommon ability, rather than the ability itself. Athletes are not so different from other entertainers: what they do, or how they perform is of only superficial importance. More significant is how consumers respond to them.

Let's take the tennis player Maria Sharapova, of whom Steffi Graf once said: "She is so talented, so there was always a chance that she would come back to this level." Graf's opinion is widely shared: Sharapova had talent and used it to stage a comeback when her career seemed doomed. In 2009, Sharapova, then 22 going on 23, slumped to 126th in the world women's tennis rankings, her all-time lowest position. She hadn't won a major tournament for over a year, and struggled with an incessant shoulder injury. After a promising start to her career, the Russia-born, US-based player faded and was hardly a factor in Grand Slam events. Then, in 2012, she bounced back to peak form and won the French Open Championship.

Her desultory tennis form up to this point didn't have much, if any, effect on her celebrity status. Sharapova (b. 1987) had been the most conspicuous and highest earning female athlete in the world since 2004. And she has remained that way since. In the 12 months after she hit rock bottom, she earned \$25 million (£15.7 million), twice as much as any other female in sport. Even while her prize money dried up, she prospered from an endorsement portfolio that included Nike, Head, Evian, Clear Shampoo, Sony Ericsson, Tiffany, Tag Heuer and Parlux, which made Maria Sharapova For Women eau de parfum. Even while she suffered on court, Sharapova extended her Nike agreement in 2010 for eight years in a deal worth potentially as much as \$70 million. Sales of her Nike line of tennis apparel shot up 26 percent in 2010 and her ballet flat was the top-selling shoe at Cole Haan (Badenhausen 2011).

By the time Sharapova rediscovered her early career touch, her earnings were up to \$27.1 million, over \$10 million more than Serena Williams, who is often acknowledged as the best woman tennis player ever (and whose fragrance is called *Serena Glam Slam*). Sharapova's earnings were about half those of Rihanna and Lady Gaga and about \$7 million less than the actress Kristen Stewart, but more than Sofia Vergara or any other female TV star. Sharapova has over 8 million Facebook friends.

Even if we accept Graf's point that Sharapova had talent, her prodigiousness in securing the lucrative endorsement deals and maintaining visibility appears disproportionate to what Smart would regard as her authentic achievements on court. Sharapova may not have singlehandedly subordinated the ethos of sports to entertainment and commerce, but she showed how perfectly each complemented the others. She was consistently the best-known, most frequently googled, most avidly followed female athlete in the world during the early twenty-first century. Serena Williams and other Grand Slam-winning contemporaries, such as Sam Stosur and Victoria Azarenka, could beat on her on court, but nowhere else.

Historically, there are athletes whose dominance in their respective sports would seem to justify crediting them with talent, yet who register little recognition beyond those sports. In the 1970s and 1980s, David Bryant (b. 1931) was supreme in lawn bowls, as was Geet Sethi (b. 1961) in billiards in the 1990s, and Phil Taylor (b. 1960) in darts. Netball's Vicki Wilson (b. 1965) and squash's Heather McKay (b. 1941) were leaders of their respective sports. Much garlanded as Bryant and the others were, they were never offered big endorsement contracts, nor afforded the kind of celebrity status enjoyed by the athletes mentioned earlier in this essay. Being in the right sport – one that receives media attention – matters; but there are other factors. Sharapova

was white, over six feet tall and had the kind of looks we often associate with super-models. Beckham also had good looks. Woods didn't. Jordan was decent looking, but not drop-dead; and, of course, he was an African American. There are no rules: context, as ever, is vital to understanding why some athletes have been and still are acknowledged as authentically great and others remain largely unknown. Circumstances, not looks, ethnicity or playing prowess influence who becomes a celebrity. We don't have to deny Smart's claim that some athletes are better than others: we simply have to point out that this may, in some contexts, have a bearing on their status, while, in others, it may not.

To the Center

In answering the question "Why has sport moved from the periphery to the centre of popular culture?" John Horne writes, "The media, sponsors and marketing agencies are merely exploiting a growing interest in sport, which has been created by increasing media coverage of sport" (2006: 80). Yet surely they weren't "merely exploiting": they were actively propelling sport to its central position. Advertisers made the athletes featured in campaigns more visible, recognizable, and, in a self-fulfilling way, more attractive to other advertisers.

Horne believes that there were other factors at work, the interest in health, fitness and the overall well-being of the body being one. In the 1970s, consumers nourished an awareness of the body. Sport provided an arena in which hale and hearty bodies were displayed. A more decisive change was the proliferation of television channels and their obvious requirement: content. Sports provided relatively cheap content: production costs were low compared to drama and, for commercial TV companies, the advertising income more than offset them. ESPN's venture in 1980 was every bit as audacious as that of MTV (which launched in 1981). While the latter filled its airtime with music, ESPN showed nothing but sports. By 1998, the channel was received by 70 percent of all US households and broadcast 23 percent of all televised sports. The network's reach extended to 160 different countries and it provided services in 19 languages.

Surely, you can have too much of a good thing. Not when it comes to sport, it seems. Between 1991, when the National Basketball Association clinched a \$600 million four-year deal with NBC television, to 2011 when the National Football League signed TV deals worth \$27 billion (£16.65 billion) over nine years, sports underwent an astonishing transformation, not just in the US but elsewhere in the world. In English soccer in the same period, the Premier League's TV deal rose from £304 million over five years to £3 billion over three years. This reflects the value of the product sports delivers, but also the status of competitors, who not only earn as much, and in many, many cases, more than entertainers, but who have comparable status.

Where once TV viewers watched competition, now they consume spectacle, as Horne puts it (2006: 89). Sport is presented in much the same way as other forms of entertainment, whether music, drama, or news. And, as it's also consumed in the

same way, why shouldn't we call sport entertainment? This might not sound such a defamatory question today, but it would once have been a slight against the competitive endeavors that separated heroes from other mortals and provided events that were regarded by many with spiritual reverence.

At the same time, the rogue elements of sport have been domesticated. Once, there was no place for rebels or political protestors. Resistance was turned into stylistic affectation, making people like Andre Agassi, Eric Cantona and Dennis Rodman seem like insurgent forces instead of the house-trained poseurs they really were. Nike, more than any other advertiser, expertly honed their images to represent youthful insolence. More likely they were agents of containment working on behalf of an organization that "positioned itself as a rebellious, maverick, and anti-authoritarian company," as Jim McKay describes Nike (1999: 418).

One wonders how Nike might have managed Muhammad Ali, who spoke out in favor of the separation of blacks and whites and opposed the social integration championed in the 1960s and till the present day? Or Diego Maradona, a fervent admirer of Cuban leader Fidel Castro, whose hand he kissed in deference. Or Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who were expelled in shame after their black power salute at the 1968 Olympic Games and never allowed to compete in sports again. Or even Billie Jean King whose sexuality became a source of scandal in 1981 when her secretary took legal action against her and outed her as a lesbian. In their own ways, these and many other athletes resisted conformity, whether protesting against war, consorting with Communist leaders or transgressing sexual norms. As such, they were internationally known, admired by some, abhorred by others. But they were not celebrities. Their private lives weren't pored over, they weren't hunted by paparazzi and their reputations were built from athletic accomplishments, not advertisements. None had their own signature cologne.

Deeds that were once regarded as violations cost all these figures dearly: today, they would be the equivalent of rhodium (though, in King's case, the disclosure of sexual preferences after an outing is not especially inflammable material, especially when it concerns tennis players). Those who were stigmatized or, in Smith and Carlos's case, ostracized in their day might be notorious now. And that isn't necessarily a bad thing for a celebrity.

As sport morphed into popular entertainment, its main characters were subject to the same treatment as other celebrities. The rewards were great: \$60 million plus is no longer such an extraordinary yearly income for many elite performers. For such earnings the surrender of any residual private life, a promise to not to misbehave and an outward commitment to the values of sports must seem a fair exchange.

Note

This is an amended version of chapter 12 of the author's *Celebrity/Culture*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2013).

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From Celebrity to Influencer

Tracing the Diffusion of Celebrity Value across the Data Stream

Alison Hearn and Stephanie Schoenhoff

In January 2013, Canadian blogger Zach Bussey began a year-long effort to live an entirely sponsored life. He cleared all his belongings out of his apartment and attempted to live solely off the perks he generated by his social media influence alone. Bussey offered different promotional services, such as special dedicated blog posts, twitter mentions, Tumblr images, and YouTube videos to those brands and companies who would provide him with products or perks. While many people have used their bodies to promote products and services, Bussey appears to be the first person to offer his entire life as a platform for marketers (Bussey 2013).

Zach Bussey embodies a new kind of worker subjectivity that has emerged from the data stream: the SMI, or social media influencer. The SMI works to generate a form of “celebrity” capital by cultivating as much attention as possible and crafting an authentic “personal brand” via social networks, which can subsequently be used by companies and advertisers for consumer outreach. Like the celebrity, the SMI is produced, not born; he or she is identified and constituted by a variety of social media intelligence analytics and social scoring companies, such as Klout and peerindex. The emergence of the SMI occurs against the backdrop of proliferating, always-on social media platforms, and within a broader context of an exhausted neoliberal political economic system, marked by perpetual crisis, austerity regimes, and employment precarity. As traditional jobs are disappearing and questions proliferate about how and in what way economic value is constituted, achieving some kind of celebrity status – on reality television, YouTube, or other social media sites – has come to seem as reasonable a life goal as any other for many people. In the figure of the SMI, we see the pursuit of reputation and micro-celebrity configured as a kind of “hope labor” (Kuehn and Corrigan 2013); work that might, with luck, come to ensure economic stability in the long run. The SMI, like both the self-brander and reality TV participant before it, signals the dispersal, generalization, and individualization of the pursuit and practices of celebrity value across

the population at large. If anyone with a computer can become “internet famous,” and the practices of celebrity-seeking are being taken up by all kinds of people in all kinds of ways, have the meaning and value of celebrity changed once and for all?

While several critics have analyzed the rise of the “micro-celebrity” in the online era (Senft 2008; Marwick 2013; Marwick and boyd 2011; van Dijk 2013), few have worked to historicize these developments, or to situate them within broader political economic transformations in the nature of work and value in the contemporary moment. Assessments of “micro-celebrity” also tend to ignore the central role played by celebrity/brand measurement mechanisms, such as the Klout or Q score, in and through which celebrity value is identified and determined. This essay will attempt to fill these gaps by providing a historical sketch of expressions of celebrity value in the twentieth century: as product, industry, property, endorser and brand. It will trace these processes as they appear in the phenomenon of the reality television participant in the 1990s and 2000s and the internet micro-celebrity, specifically the SMI, in the twenty-first century. The essay will then focus on contemporary “influence” measurement metrics, examining the ways in which both the traditional celebrity and the SMI have responded to and been conditioned by these metrics. Finally, the essay will critically assess how and in what ways celebrity value may have changed, and who really benefits from the dispersal of the logics of celebrity value-production in the age of social media.

The Condition of Celebrity

Over the past 150 years in North America and Europe specifically, modes of self-presentation have become increasingly and complicatedly conditioned by the advances of capitalism and its ever evolving search for new forms of value. Extending and doubling its role as repository of labor power, with the rise of modernity the self becomes “imprinted” with the logics of capital; it becomes a “commodity sign” (Wernick 1991: 16), functioning as both a worker and a bearer of a promotional message about work and social value in general. The celebrity, of course, is the apotheosis of these processes, expressing and representing a historically specific articulation of selfhood with processes of capitalist accumulation. The celebrity embodies exemplary forms of selfhood, models how those forms of selfhood might be achieved and lived, and functions as a catalyst in and through which desire and power are seen to coalesce. At the same time, the celebrity is an industrial formation and a point of production, generating a proprietary image-persona, which can be licensed as an aspirational endorser for other commodities or used to produce and brand a myriad of other sources of revenue for the celebrity herself, such as perfume, books, or clothing.

Numerous critics, including Richard Dyer (1979), Joshua Gamson (1994), and P. David Marshall (1997) have argued that the subject position of the celebrity has always existed in dialectical relation with the audience; audiences actively produce the celebrity via their consumption habits. While these critics acknowledge that the position of celebrity is a construction as well as a commodity, they tend to place

less focus on the fact that the “audience” is also a constructed commodity, made visible and standardized via market measurement systems like the Nielsen ratings, which broker the transactions between media producers and advertisers. Audiences, like celebrities, are constituted as a kind of “currency” via these measurement systems (Buzzard 2012), and as such do not arrive on the scene of interaction with the celebrity unmediated and freely expressive. Rather, our understanding of who an audience is and what they desire is always already a fabrication, an image or representation, whose meanings are identified and, effectively, produced by the technologies that claim to measure them (see Smythe 1977; Turow 1997; Barnes and Thomson 2004).

So, while many cultural critics offer a variety of compelling definitions of celebrity – as a mediated public persona comprised of sets of legal, cultural or political discourses, functioning as a myth, sign, or vehicle for the generation of political, cultural and economic affect (Marshall 1997; Dyer 1979; Gamson 1994; Drake 2007) – here, we wish to configure the celebrity as but one (albeit paradigmatic) example of the long, conflicted, and constantly changing relationship between modes of subjectivity, self-presentation and economic value. The celebrity is a constructed subjectivity comprised of distinct sets of self-referential, attention-seeking, market-aware practices. At the same time as a celebrity serves a specific ideological role within capitalism, as an “idol of consumption” and model of “a socially productive agent” (Lowenthal 1961: 115), illustrating and embodying what a successful and moneyed life can look like (Dyer 1979: 48–9), a celebrity is also a site of production, identified and arguably constituted by the variety of measurement mechanisms that serve to both bestow and extract value from a wide array of “selves.” As both product and productive, then, “celebrity” is here understood as naming an economic condition rather than a singular “stellar” individual.

Producing Celebrity Value: The Celebrity as Product, Industry, Property, Endorser, and Brand

The past century has seen notable changes in the ways celebrity value has been generated, deployed, and measured. Many critics highlight the ways in which celebrities, through their star image, are valuable insofar as they work to propagate ideals about individuality and freedom of self-expression, rooted in consumption and the American dream (Marshall 1997: 19; Dyer 1979). Marshall locates the emergence of celebrity within the discourses and practices of democratic culture, the public sphere, and the rise of the culture industries and the mass audience in the nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, the meaning and value of celebrity moves away from traditional assumptions about celebrities as heroes, inventors or artists, and into the ever proliferating modes of identity on offer in and through the products of the burgeoning culture industries. Marshall argues that, at this time, the term “celebrity” functioned as “a metaphor for value in modern society” (1997: 7).

Gamson situates the rise of celebrity within the studio system of early Hollywood, where it was called into being as a “means of promotion” (1994: 25), a way for studios

to differentiate their products from one another. Bound by strict contracts, which controlled the use of their names and images, celebrities were actively produced as commodity-actors and promotional signs. The value of a celebrity was predicated on their ability to bring audiences into the theater, and the practices of celebrity value production were tightly regulated. Stars' film roles were made to align with their "real" personalities, but both were equally *products*, their "glamour" understood as a mask, their personality a salable commodity over which they had very little control. As Hortense Powdermaker writes, the star system created standardized "types" which could be easily "advertised and sold," and which "banks and exhibitors regard(ed) as insurance for large profits" (1950: 229). Contrived and subject to test marketing by studio press departments, early celebrities' "real-life" personas were fed to the increasingly popular gossip and film magazines, who could, in turn, stoke the illusion of the "real" person behind the starring role (Gamson 1994: 27–9). In these early years, celebrity value was attached to both the characters played onscreen and the "authentic" person playing the character, what Richard Dyer (1979) calls "the star image."

Indeed, many stars at the time recognized the value of their public persona as a constructed product, and would deploy this rhetoric knowingly to their advantage. In 1922, for example, Rudolph Valentino put pressure on his studio, Famous Players, to give him higher wages and better roles by publishing "An open letter to the American public" in *Photoplay*. In the letter he insisted that, while he was rather "a commonplace fellow," "this other Valentino, this shadow personality, must dedicate himself to the work you expect of him ... must strive to be that character whom you want to see ... and can no longer belong entirely to himself" (Valentino 1922: 34). Valentino's strategic, self-referential address to the public illustrates the clear distinction between two types of celebrity product: the celebrity as performer and the celebrity as image and promotional object. In this second sense, the celebrity has always worked within an economic frame to generate monetizable audience "eye-balls" for themselves and for the industry at large (Gamson 1994: 58).

By the mid-twentieth century, as the studio system was disappearing, the labor of celebrity-making was increasingly spread across coterie of support people. As Gamson describes it, celebrity construction became an *industry* in its own right, "made up of highly developed and institutionally linked professions and subindustries such as public relations, entertainment law, celebrity journalism and photography, grooming and training, managing and agenting and novelty sales" (1994: 65). The more the publicity and image management machine developed, of course, the savvier the public grew about its mediating role, demanding increased access to the ordinary or "authentic" person behind the star. Celebrity industry para-texts, such as gossip magazines, in turn, were forced to diversify their promotional work, which included narrating their own operations as they created more "behind the scenes" accounts and celebrity exposés (1994: 49). So, while the value of celebrity initially was rooted in an individual actor's ability to differentiate film products and generate attention for a film, as the entertainment business grew, celebrity value production was soon dispersed across a range of people and practices. The new celebrity industry found ways to generate value from the celebrity's whole life on and off the screen,

creating lifestyle synergies between stars, products, services and events, and also began to mythologize and promote the internal operations of the celebrity industry itself.

In 1953, the promotional power of the celebrity persona was recognized by the courts with the introduction of the “right to publicity” law in the United States. Derived from privacy statutes and based on the view that the celebrated individual was the sole agent involved in the production of his or her star image, the law gave “the celebrity the right to damages and other relief for the unauthorized commercial appropriation of that celebrity’s identity” (Prakash 2012–13: 261). Ironically, this view of persona as a single-authored form of intellectual *property* was not introduced by any specific celebrity, but by the legal counsel for Paramount Studios, Melville Nimmer, who was anxious to maintain control over the profits generated by the studio’s contracted actors (Drake 2007: 225). So, while the law appeared to entrench a view of celebrity as emanating from the work of one individual, it was, in fact, an industry initiative and ultimately configured the product of that work, the star persona and its reputation, as a form of property that could be alienated and/or contractually appropriated by others. As Rosemary Coombe argues, the right to publicity law grew “massively in scope” in the later part of the twentieth century and now extends to “a person’s nickname, signature, physical pose, characterizations, singing style, vocal characteristics, body parts, frequently used phrases, car, performance style, mannerisms and gestures” (2006: 723). Insofar as they can license any and all aspects of their persona to any interested party and/or bequeath their persona to their heirs, with this law, the celebrity becomes an apparently infinite source of value generation.

Coombe (2006), Michael Madow (1993) and others have raised important questions about the ways in which the right to publicity law works to privatize culture by ignoring the role of the public in creating celebrity power and meaning and situating celebrity authorship within a single individual, but the law is also important because it lays the groundwork for the online reputation economy and contemporary practices of seeking micro-celebrity. Within the law, “recognition by the public is appropriated by the celebrity as intrinsic parts of a personality over which proprietary claims are made” (Coombe 2006: 724). In other words, here “recognition by the public” is overtly recognized as constitutive of celebrity value, but the law then transmutes the ability to generate attention and recognition into some “thing” intrinsic to the individual and configures it as their property, which can then be subject to market exchange.

Of course, as mentioned above, the ability to attract and direct attention has constituted the very definition of celebrity from the earliest years of the culture industries. A central way in which this power to direct attention has been put to work is through endorsements. While examples of celebrated individuals testifying to the worth of products or services can be traced back to the seventeenth century (Segrave 2005: 3–4), the celebrity *endorser* did not become commonplace until after World War I, paralleling the renewed focus on mass production and the growing need to manage demand and create markets (Marchand 1985: 353). Throughout the 1920s, Hollywood studios were busy capitalizing on the “testimonial vogue,” selling

the names and likenesses of their contracted stars to a wide variety of business interests and taking a cut of the profits. Stars themselves would often negotiate exclusivity deals with companies and receive supplies of the endorsed products in addition to their fee. Businesses, such as Famous Names Inc. were formed to match celebrity endorsers with products, and as the advertising industry grew, society ladies and famous businessmen also began to get in on the act. While celebrity endorsements continued through the twentieth century, they really hit their peak with the expansion of television advertising in the 1970s (Segrave 2005: 109). Throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, close to 20 percent of all advertisements in the US featured celebrity endorsers (Agrawal and Kamakura 1995; Cresswell 2008).

As the practice of celebrity endorsement grew, so did the demand on the part of advertisers for assurances as to the value of the celebrity name they were considering employing. Established methods of measuring celebrity impact included assessing box office share and levels of coverage in the popular press or conducting polling, but the most reliable methods to emerge were ratings services (Rein et al 1997: 119–122). Various technologies for measuring the responses of media audiences to entertainment had been in existence since 1929 (Buzzard 2012: 3), but in the 1970s and 1980s, as television media wanted to diversify, the focus of measurement moved from mass audiences to niche audiences (Barnes and Thomson 2004). New cable companies with more specialized media products could not succeed in selling spots to advertisers without proof that they could successfully target specialized audiences. Radical advances in computing power and improved measurement technologies produced the “people meter” in 1987 to address this problem; older audience metrics could only measure household preferences, whereas the people meter was able to measure individual viewing habits within a household. With this measurement system in place, media specialization and the growth of cable was assured. As Barnes and Thomson note, it was “the *measurement* of audience behavior, not the audience behavior per se that change[d] the media” (2004: 78). The “people meter” allowed for the growth of increasingly personalized target marketing and advertising and signaled the beginning of the end of the mass audience. Insofar as we accept that audiences as commodities are representations and constructed snapshots, produced by measurement systems like the Nielsen ratings, we can argue that, in the wake of the people meter, projections of the “audience” began to fragment into smaller and smaller demographic groups. These developments, predicated on advances in computer power and measurement technologies, provide early intimations of the dispersal of the audience into today’s hyper-individualized, personalized form: the “social media user” and/or “prosumer” (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010).

While Nielsen ratings produce the dominant “currency” by which buyers of advertising and media-producing sellers exchange the commodity of audience attention, and are the industry standard in terms of measuring what television show audiences are watching (Buzzard 2012: 1–2), they do not gather data on what specific celebrities are most popular or resonant with audiences. The Q score, introduced in 1964 by Marketing Evaluations, attempts to fill this gap. It measures both how familiar audiences are with the celebrity and how much they like the celebrity; the number of people who say a celebrity is their favorite is divided by the number of people

who say they have heard of that celebrity to arrive at a final score (Finkle 1992). The Q score also does qualitative research into why audiences do or do not respond to specific celebrities, providing networks, advertisers and other subscribers with detailed information about a particular celebrity's positive and negative attributes as seen by audiences. Like the Nielsen ratings, over the years the Q score has diversified from measuring simple "TVQ" to measurements of Product Q, Impact Q, which measures how absorbed audiences are with a show, Cartoon Q, Sports Q, and even Dead Q, which measures the power of the reputation of dead celebrities (Dempsey 2003). Recently, other celebrity reputation measurement systems have joined the Q score. The David-Brown Index (or DBI), introduced in 2006, aims to provide an even more nuanced view of a celebrity's ability to influence consumer purchases by measuring attributes such as "appeal," "trust," "aspiration," and "influence" (McDonald 2006), while the E-Score Celebrity Reports include measurements of more than 40 celebrity attributes and provide results in terms of "most appealing," "least appealing," "biggest gains and losses," "up and comers," and "top potential spokespersons" categories (E-Poll Market Research 2011).

The emergence of these celebrity metrics in the last few decades has served to concretize and render visible what was previously the informal and imperfect art of determining celebrity value. The Q score and other indexes claim to be able to identify the levels of trust and influence a celebrity has in the population at large, beyond their assumed fan base. Like the Nielsen ratings, they also provide a standard celebrity "currency," allowing marketers and agents to compare and trade in celebrities more easily.

The common celebrity currency provided by the Q score has coincided with, and arguably enabled, the rise of the celebrity *brand*. While stars such as Cher, Elizabeth Taylor and Jaclyn Smith tried their hand at branding perfume and clothing lines in the 1980s (Rufo 2013), it was not until the 1990s that many celebrities, recognizing that their celebrity persona itself could often command greater economic value than the products they were endorsing, began to configure themselves explicitly as brands (Prakash 2012–13: 254). Today, celebrity branding is *de rigueur*. No longer a hired gun for some other company, celebrities invest in themselves; taking full control of their public image, they build their fame or celebrity value as a form of market equity, and actively partner with other brands to produce an array of products that seem to represent their "authentic" selves (Cresswell 2008).

The celebrity brand expands the value of celebrity by opening more avenues of connection with consumers, and strengthens the process of value generation because it relies so completely on the ongoing and infinitely malleable distinctiveness of the celebrity's "personal" lifestyle. With the growth of celebrity branding, "authenticity" becomes the ultimate arbiter of value; beyond the roles played or music created, today's celebrity brand is predicated on convincing consumers of the authenticity of their inherent "being" beyond the limelight. Buttressed by the right to publicity law and quantified by measures like the Q score, the combination of a celebrity's highly individualized lifestyle with the logics of marketing signals the apotheosis of the celebrity condition described at the beginning of this essay; with the rise of

celebrity branding, “celebrity” is no longer simply a metaphor for value, it has become directly value-producing in and of itself.

Promotional Post-Fordism, Self-Branding and Reality TV

The intensification of celebrity value generation via the celebrity brand and the fragmentation of media audiences into ever more particular niches are not solely the result of the technological affordances of television rating and celebrity impact measurement systems. They also have taken place within the context of broader political and economic developments over the past several decades, including modes of “flexible accumulation,” capitalist production processes involving strategies of permanent innovation and mobility, reliance on computerization and networked communications, and the intensification of promotion and marketing practices (Harvey 1990: 288). The growing centrality of marketing and branding in capital accumulation has produced what Andrew Wernick (1991) calls a “promotional culture,” an era of “spin,” where self-advantage in communication dominates, and what matters most is “winning” attention, emotional allegiance and market share. A neoliberal mode of governmentality accompanies these economic and cultural developments, granting primacy to the operations of the free market and reducing the role of the state, and stressing individual responsibility over communitarian or state-run initiatives (Harvey 2005).

Work under the hypernetworked conditions of neoliberal promotional capitalism is marked by flexibility, casualization, segmentation, intensity, speed-up, and increased competition (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). This, in turn, has produced an “enterprise culture” in the workplace, in which workers are expected to be “entrepreneurs of the self” (du Gay 1996: 60–70), always striving to find ways to advance their own interests as against those of other employees. Autonomous Marxist critics argue that the increased production of immaterial commodities, such as marketing and branding, demands new kinds of “immaterial labor” which involves creativity, innovation, and the manipulation of personal emotion, personality and affect (Lazzarato 2001). These developments herald an era of “the social factory,” where work is dispersed into all areas of life and human sociality becomes the site for the creation of new forms of productive activity and their transformation into commodities (Negri 1989).

In this culture of image-based socialized production, attention-getting forms of self-presentation become crucial to survival; one must not only do a good job, one must be seen to be doing it. Here, the “capacity for calculated posing” becomes more important than possessing any specific skill set, and notoriety comes to serve as a “proxy indicator” of personal ability (Sternberg 2001: 11). At this moment, argues Paolo Virno, “productive labor, in its totality, appropriates the special characteristics of the performing artist,” and insofar as they generate and provide templates for effective performance and image skills, the culture industries become the paradigmatic mode of production, “generalized and elevated to the rank of *canon*” (2004: 54–5, 58).

The phenomenon of self-branding emerged as a product of these broader social, economic and political developments in the late 1990s. Positioned as a form of “self-help” literature, self-branding books encourage individuals to purposefully construct potent images of themselves in order to compete and gain power in the volatile and precarious work world. For the personal brander, success is dependent, not upon specific skills or motivation, but on the glossy packaging of the self and the unrelenting pursuit of attention in all available public venues (see Graham 2001; Montoya 2002). In this literature, an improved “self” is a promotional vehicle designed to sell: one that anticipates the desires of a target market. The self-brander works to generate a kind of celebrity value simply by cultivating a notable image-persona. In this way, we can see self-branding as form of affective, immaterial labor purposefully undertaken by individuals in order to garner attention, reputation, and, potentially, profit (Hearn 2008).

The rise of reality television production in the 1990s and 2000s signaled the beginning of the pursuit of celebrity value across the population at large by creating an ideal venue for the generation of celebrity value in the form of a profitable self-brand. Indeed, in response to fiscal crises within mainstream television, reality television producers summoned regular people to offer up their labor for free, cynically holding out the promise of an attainable celebrity lifestyle and thereby lowering production costs and increasing network profits. Narratives of some reality shows, such as *The Voice* or *American Idol*, explicitly tell the story of celebrity construction, while others, like *Jersey Shore* or *Real Housewives*, simply follow chosen participants around as they “live” their lives in front of television cameras, their work/lives apparently one seamless flow of value generation. But, no matter the explicit content of the show, reality television programs take up the self-mythologizing work of earlier forms of “behind the scenes” celebrity promotion; they are, for the most part, stories *about* television itself – its modes of production, its commercial and promotional logic, and its mechanisms for celebrity-making and work (Hearn 2009). The labor of reality television participants produces, both, an ideological product about the power of visibility, notoriety and celebrity, and is, itself, productive, insofar as the participant generates a potentially monetizable form of micro-celebrity (Hearn 2011).

Social Media, the Reputation Economy, the SMI and Traditional Celebrities

As a result of the popularity and near ubiquity of social media platforms, the practices of self-branding and micro-celebrity, entrenched and formalized by reality television, have only intensified in recent years. On websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, individuals can craft a public presentation of self that is ostensibly a reflection of their “reality” – no need for television networks or brand sponsors – and can monetize themselves by working to develop legions of followers or subscribers. Indeed, the widespread uptake of social media platforms has been heralded by some as initiating a wholesale change in the nature of capitalism, one predicated on social

participation and expressive freedom (see Bauwens 2005; Benkler 2006). Advocates assert that, simply by expressing themselves, individuals have become empowered participants in an emerging online reputation economy, where the reputation generated by social media participation functions as a new form of currency and, more generally, value (Schawbel 2011; Klein 2013). Within the context of the online reputation economy, then, access to celebrity status has seemingly become democratized.

Ten years on from the introduction of Facebook, and in the wake of numerous lawsuits and scandals about its monetization strategies and user privacy policies (Sengupta 2012; Goel and Wyatt 2013), however, it seems clear that predictions about the democratic and freely expressive “public sphere” of the internet have failed to materialize. Rather, the online world is increasingly governed and delimited by private interests who own and control the platforms and affordances in and through which we express ourselves, and, as a result, is shot through with promotion and marketing. Not only do social media platforms sell access to our online communication as metadata to marketers and other private interests, businesses like Sysomos, Radian6 or Bazaarvoice have emerged to find the profit in our sociality by offering to manage, measure and optimize both corporate and individual reputations for a fee. And, more recently, social-scoring businesses like Klout offer to provide users with an “objective” measure of the full impact of their social media influence or reputation. These “social scores” claim to make identification of “influential” people on social media easier; indeed they have facilitated the rise of people like Zach Bussey, the micro-celebrity-seeking social media influencer.

Businesses have begun to rely on SMIs due to the sheer volume of advertising online, which drives down actual click-through rates and individual engagement levels. And, as research shows that consumers are more likely to believe in the authenticity of a claim made by a personal acquaintance than one made by a rich celebrity (Schaefer 2012; Martin 2012; Chapman 2013), companies also have begun to move away from using celebrity endorsers. Along with search engine optimization and social media monitoring then, integrated social media marketing campaigns increasingly involve identifying, connecting with, and providing perks to people who are already fans or faithful consumers, hoping they will generate profitable word of mouth about the product or service (Schaefer 2012; Martin 2012; Daniels 2012).

In order to achieve ROI (return on influence), marketers look to identify social media users who have extensive social networks and use these networks frequently (the customer influence effect or CIE), produce relevant or “sticky” content about the product category, and whose personality “resonates” with the tone and feel of the brand (Berkman 2012: 1–3). There are no real monetary incentives offered to SMIs, rather, influence marketing relies on flattering the egos of individuals by offering them special “perks” in the form of free products or access to events and services in exchange for their public endorsement. As many critics have noted, brands are so fully integrated into our way of life, consumers live in and through them (Zwick et al. 2008), and so when they are approached by a brand to receive a perk, they are likely to go along with it; consumers often will voluntarily give over their information or “like” a brand on Facebook, because they feel it expresses who they are. In true neoliberal fashion, word-of-mouth marketing configures consumer participation as

a form of empowering “prosumption” (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010), but, in reality, the work of marketing and promotion is simply being downloaded onto consumers. In the age of social media, consumers move from being fans to being producers of free promotional content for brands (Berkman 2012; Zwick et al. 2008), and from occasional endorsers to micro-celebrity-seeking SMIs.

The conflation of the role of fan with the role of potential promoter and marketer, and the move away from using celebrity endorsers by businesses has impacted how traditional celebrities manage their brands online. Celebrities are now recognizing that they can better grow their brand equity (comprised of fans’ brand loyalty) by cultivating more consistent and ongoing exchanges with fans on sites like Twitter or Instagram. Regular users, in turn, are offered the promise of being able to interact with their favorite stars in ways that seem more equitable, cooperative, and “authentic”; users may be retweeted, become a “friend” or have their picture “liked” by a celebrity. Indeed, social media hold out the promise of genuine access to the famous – a similar promise, it should be noted, held out by fan magazines and behind-the-scenes exposés decades earlier. The pursuit of “authentic” promotional connections with fans can include celebrities posting “candid” photos of “everyday life” in brand-name outfits on Instagram, or mentioning a product they have encountered on Twitter. So, rather than posing in glamorous and glossy magazine ads, celebrity endorsers can now just show themselves living as “themselves” *with* brands in order to promote them. This, of course, is a far more convenient way for the celebrity to do business; for every tweet highlighting a brand she uses, for example, Kim Kardashian is paid \$10,000, and the chances are good that the tweet was composed by someone on her public relations staff or in an advertising firm (Piazza 2012; Cohen 2009).

Celebrity authenticity tactics also extend to publicly eschewing traditional forms of promotion in favor of direct communication with fans. This was clearly illustrated in December 2013 when Beyoncé released an entire album by announcing it directly to followers of her personal Instagram account without any prior publicity or marketing. Beyoncé (2013) explained via a YouTube video that she wanted to give her music to fans directly, explaining that, these days, “it is all about the single and the hype, there is so much that gets between the music and the artist and the fans.” This unconventional marketing strategy clearly paid off as Beyoncé’s album sold over 1.4 million copies in the first four weeks of its release (Miller 2014). Likewise, when Justin Timberlake released his album *20/20* in March 2013 the marketing focus was expressly on Timberlake “giving his fans the impression of direct contact and feeding them a steady stream of topics to amplify through social media” (Sisario 2013). As Jayne Charneski, a marketing executive at the Intelligence Group, notes “now everyone wants V.I.P. access ... They want to feel that they know the artists, that they are insiders, and now through social media they can literally and figuratively be friends with the stars” (quoted by Sisario 2013).

While it is true that social media provide new possibilities for interaction between celebrities and fans, these exchanges are usually more calculated than fans might want to recognize. Even on social media, the celebrity remains a brand, and their celebrity condition requires pursuing their brand’s marketing objectives in any and all public venues. Just as with a company’s use of devoted unpaid brand loyalists and

SMIs, a canny celebrity on social media rarely has to promote their own product because fans will do it for them; all they have to do is retweet a fan's praise and the chorus of promotion grows. So, while the format of celebrity/fan communication has changed as a result of social media, the conventions and tactics of PR and marketing have not disappeared in the least; they have simply been adjusted to accommodate these new technological affordances. As we saw from the historical review provided above, efforts to monetize aspects of the "authentic" person behind the star have been going on in the celebrity industry for almost a century, and, clearly, they continue still.

In the age of social media, the micro-celebrity SMI appropriates the practices of the traditional celebrity and the traditional celebrity deploys the tactics of authenticity ostensibly embodied by the SMI. But both figures are conditioned and bound together by the same promotional capitalist logics that have come to subsume subjectivity and sociality to economic imperatives at every turn; if attention can be generated and a reputation secured, then it appears as though there is money to be made just by "being" oneself. The question remains, however: who measures and generates this contemporary form of reputational capital and celebrity value and who ultimately benefits from the practice?

Klout: Measuring the Value of the Micro-Celebrity

As mentioned above, the pursuit of micro-celebrity online and, more specifically, the rise of the SMI have been made possible by social scoring services that claim to measure and represent the totality of a person's social media impact, participation and reputation. The most popular of these social scoring systems is Klout. Started by computer programmer Joe Fernandez in 2007, Klout was taken up immediately by individuals and businesses, marketers and branders who were in search of more authentic brand advocates and influencers. Over 100 million people have signed up and now have a Klout score (Stevenson 2012; McHugh 2012), and the company has been recently acquired by Lithium Technologies for 200 million dollars (Ha 2014).

In calculating an individual's score, Klout asks for access to the user's social media accounts, and monitors over 400 "signals" from their online presence, including Facebook likes, shares, comments, subscribers, retweets, followers, Google +1s, LinkedIn connections, recommendations, rankings and ratings, Foursquare tips, and Wikipedia listings (klout.com). The user is assigned a score out of 100 and is then shown which moments of their online social media participation have been most resonant or "impactful" and which topic areas they discuss most often. Klout also asks users to invite other people to join and to name their own personal "influencers." Users can endorse other people's influence in specific subject areas by giving them a +K, and can also "build" their own influence and acquire +Ks by answering questions posed by others. Most importantly, the site asks users to sign up for the Klout perks program, which includes free access to products and services matched to their interests and can be earned by increasing their overall score. If a user's score is over 60, they will be identified as an influencer and may get even better perks. Other social

media metrics systems, such as Kred or Peerindex, offer similar kinds of perks and incentives. While Klout and other social scoring sites claim to provide a service to individual consumers, they monetize themselves via their perks programs, selling brands and companies access to consumers who are always already configured as potential influencers.

In one sense, then, the Klout score operates like the Nielsen ratings, as a way to measure and capture audiences and drive them to advertisers. In another sense, it operates like the Q score, identifying individuals that brands and companies might want to target as a possible product endorser and consumer influencer. But, unlike either the Nielsen ratings or the Q score, the Klout score also does the work of traditional television networks insofar as it offers entertaining products in the form of the score and the perks, *and* the work of traditional advertisers or marketers, insofar as it helps devise product launches and promotional campaigns for businesses. In this way, Klout itself operates as a brand – a conditioning point of mediation between companies and consumers, and a portal through which certain qualities of experiences can be accessed. Indeed, many businesses have begun using Klout scores as a way to evaluate customers and generate free promotion on the ground. For example, hotels, such as the Palms in Las Vegas, will now check a guest's Klout score and, if it is high, offer them an upgrade. Salesforce.com offers swifter customer service to those consumers with a high Klout score (Stevenson 2012) and American Airlines has opened up its posh waiting lounge the "Admirals Club" to anyone with a Klout score of 55 or higher (Price 2013). The number of these kinds of Klout-based upgrades is growing daily. In this way, Klout and other social influence metrics (such as Peerindex or Kred) are effectively working to inaugurate a covert kind of class system based entirely on the degree and depth of consumers' online participation. The parameters of this system, however, are entirely controlled by these companies' black-boxed and proprietary metrics.

For individual users, the standardized Klout score out of 100 is the self-brand fetish object par excellence. As celebrities and regular people can both access the service, Klout holds out the enticing possibility that regular users might, one day, reach the same high scores as traditional celebrities like Justin Bieber or Barack Obama; all they have to do is cultivate their celebrity value by perpetually tweeting, blogging, commenting, and posting. Klout also appeals to the aspirational nature of celebrity through its "perks" program, rewarding everyday users for their reputational capital by providing them with "special" access to goods and VIP services in a manner that users might feel was similar to those accessed by traditional celebrities. The very structure of Klout exploits and reinforces the logics of celebrity by inviting users to work to achieve visibility and attention and to take part in a life of consuming without cost.

These days, the Klout score is also a must-have accessory for entrance into the job market. Indeed, human resources professionals and employers now see online influence as an important value-added in potential employees, and routinely check potential employees' Klout scores before hiring (Meister 2012). Social scoring also has infiltrated traditional workplaces via enterprise social media platforms, like Yammer, Jive and Saba. Saba, in particular, offers public employee assessment

scoring – called the PQ or “people quotient” – an algorithm that claims to measure a worker’s productivity in real time, compare it to other workers in similar positions across the company, and assess the quality and quantity of the employee’s social contributions (Saba.com). The more an employee posts, chats, and blogs, the higher the score. Employee scores are then made public on the Saba platform.

Given these developments, we could argue that it is not only SMIs, or micro-celebrity bloggers and YouTube stars who are engaged in the search for celebrity value. Toiling away on their blogs, twitterfeeds and Instagram posts, we could argue that all workers, employed or unemployed, are compelled to take on the work of online sociality, image building, and reputation construction. In so doing, they are engaged in what Kuehn and Corrigan (2013) have recently called “hope labor”: uncompensated work performed for exposure or experience with the hope that it might pay off down the line.

It is crucial to remember, however, that the Klout score, like the Nielsen rating and Q score before it, is not a neutral enterprise; it is an actively productive one, which focuses on moving people into new markets and profit-producing opportunities. As Liz Moor and Celia Lury note, these kinds of brand metrics “are used less as an index of a fixed or already established value, and more as a way of understanding the potential of brands to create value within the context of dynamic social relationships” (2011: 446). As a measure of reputation, the Klout score does not just take a snapshot of an individual’s influence, it predicts their power to recommend or influence others into the future and, more importantly, moves them into potential new markets. These scores conflate measuring with targeting as they identify opportunities for further value creation, and are productive insofar as they employ evaluative criteria that work very much in their own interests alone – matching people to marketed goods. In the end, it is not the social media influencer who is the new celebrity, it’s the Klout score itself.

The Value of Celebrity?

As he finished his year-long experiment to live an entirely sponsored life, Zach Bussey concluded that, while he had learned many valuable lessons about marketing and people, “in the success, there was a lot of failure.” While someone *could* live off the perks of being an SMI as he had done, Bussey argues that no one really *should* do it, noting that “this project is NOT something sustainable in the long run” (Bussey, personal communication, 2015). Clearly, Bussey learned the hard way that the contemporary pursuit of celebrity and reputation as an easy road to economic stability, embodied in the figure of the SMI and summoned into existence by the Klout score, produces value, to be sure, but rarely for the individual engaged in these practices. Rather, just like celebrity gossip magazines and reality television shows before it, in perpetuating the dream of attaining celebrity through its metrics, Klout produces in the figure of the SMI, not a real celebrity, but a “hope worker,” whose job may be to stimulate consumption but who, himself, remains unpaid, unvalued and just as precarious as ever.

Against the backdrop of post-2008 austerity regimes, job losses, employment change and instability, and as social scoring metrics become more commonplace, many people simply feel compelled to pursue celebrity value by working on their self-brands; we *must* post, participate, blog, twitter, because this will demonstrate our special value and influence, which might act as a hedge against our insecurity. Janus-faced, social-scoring services like Klout promise the glamour of access and social mobility but in reality work to push consumers into the arms of marketers and generate more metadata grist for the mill of the big data miners. Most problematically, they work to instantiate a new kind of social class predicated entirely on the forms of reputation that they construct, attribute and then validate in an entirely unaccountable manner. Ultimately, these social-scoring measurement mechanisms discipline, direct and intervene in social identities, social relations and social life, rendering visible the power of capital through their branded, yet opaque, form of scoring semiotics.

Clearly, the pursuit of celebrity value as it has become generalized across the population at large has not resulted in greater democratization of celebrity or in the leveling of the field of opportunities so that all individuals might access the privileges and power of the celebrated 1 percent. The condition of celebrity has always been an industrial formation that has required a whole set of support people to maintain it and this remains the case today. Real celebrities do not have to tweet or post on Facebook; they can hire someone else to do this for them and make money doing so. Traditional celebrities do not have to go in search of opportunities to sell their views and opinions; they have agents to do it for them. Traditional celebrities have legal ownership and control over all aspects of their public persona, while micro-celebrities on social media do not. The very logic of celebrity, like the logic of capitalism itself, is that only a select few can achieve success within it; no matter how accessible widespread visibility and attention might appear to be, the conditions of possibility for garnering and valorizing that attention remain in the hands of a very few, privately owned companies, like Klout.

The story of the ways in which subjectivity and modes of self-presentation have been conditioned by economic processes is long and complex. The rise of the celebrity condition during the twentieth century is but one chapter of this story. The diffusion of celebrity-seeking practices on social media and across the population at large in the twenty-first century is yet another. While social scoring metrics may appear to democratize and socialize processes of collective assessment and celebrity value generation, their proprietary algorithms and protocols work instead to insert users into global flows of data and to subject us to controlled algorithmic identities (Cheney-Lippold 2011) predicated entirely on our status as consumers. These processes highlight the real subsumption of subjectivity and social relationships to processes of capitalist valorization and accumulation. Indeed, while the mechanisms for attaining high visibility and celebrity value may be widely accessible today, under contemporary socialized capitalism, so far, they have completely failed to bring about any real material improvement in people's lives and managed only to exacerbate already existing class inequality.

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Part Four

Global Celebrity

Introduction

Sean Redmond

90 days to stop another disaster in Africa: Unfolding crisis in Sudan could see 300,000 deaths I hear on the news. Simply can't understand what is going on. Is it genocide? (Notes from Angelina Jolie's Sudan Journal, 2005)

In 2011, China's most popular satellite channel, Hunan Television, started its mid-Autumn festival with a "spectacular" cover version of Lady Gaga's hit song "Bad romance." Broadcast to "hundreds of millions" of people worldwide, the performance begins with a group of miniskirted musicians playing the song on crystal-shaped traditional Chinese instruments. Set on a neon-lit stage, the musicians are blended constructions: their straightened hair, makeup, clothing, and movement are shaped in the imagination of the West, of American television "variety" spectacle in particular, but the arrangement of the song and the instruments that score it speak of Chinese musical traditions and idioms. A giant two-story dolls' house is then seen to seamlessly slide onto the stage, and in each "window," of which there are eight, groups of senior Chinese citizens belt out the lyrics to the song in Changsha's local dialect. Dressed in modern clothing, in domestic spaces such as the kitchen and lounge, they embody the condition of a confident China expressing itself through a Western pop song. The world has been rendered a dolls' house, smaller in size but extended in space – a global village with China at the center of it. This is a form of global celebrity, composed of a complex and confused mixture of the local and the global, of the performative and the self-reflexive, and of the specificities of the encounter between the constructed and artificial qualities of celebrityization in the first decades of the twenty-first century – China's century.

The idea that celebrity is global, found across the four hemispheres of the world, is an assumption pretty much taken for granted. When we examine the broadcast and narrowcast ecosystems from nation-state to nation-state, and when we look at the way the social media are interacted with, the cult and culture of celebrity clearly

weave their way across outputs, schedules, formats, blogs, postings, gatherings, fandoms, and spectacle event moments. From the back streets of Kabul to the markets of Morocco, from the crap tables of Macau to the council estates of Coventry, and from the hipstervilles of Melbourne to the shrines and temples of Tokyo, celebrity is played out as entertainment, value, product and commodity, and as the way identity, community, nation, and region are forged, cohered, reimagined as stable and secure, and sometimes powerfully resisted. Celebrity, then, sits at the heart of the myth of the global media center, informing all the watery mediascapes and ideoscapes (Appadurai 1990) of these liquid modern times.

They talk about being careful driving on the roads. There was recently an explosion of an anti-tank mine killing two Save the Children staff. It was on October 10, when Masteri (south of El Geneina) was declared a "no go" zone after an alleged rebel attack on a police station. (Notes from Angelina Jolie's Sudan Journal, 2005)

There are two ways to read or unpack the meaning and influence of global celebrity. First, it can be read as central to the global proliferation and incorporation of neoliberal values, processes and practices. Global celebrity involves the transmission of a homogenized and low quality, individualist and commodity-driven Western culture that threatens, therefore, to flatten out all cultural distinctions and the very existence of what are argued to be rich and culturally diverse world cultures. For example, if we draw on Marie Gillespie's research on Asian teenagers in Southall, United Kingdom, we find: "it is perhaps no wonder that they turn to a third, alternative space of fantasy and identification: they draw on utopian images of America to construct a position of 'world teenagers' which transcends those available in British or Indian cultures" (1989: 230). Global celebrity involves the transmission of a dominant, Western ideology that both naturalizes the Western way of life as the only life worth having, and fetishizes its democratic structures, social relationships, and lifestyles. When British Indians consume the Kardashians or the sweet life of Britney Spears, they are investing in the American Dream and the imagined possibilities it offers.

It is also argued that global celebrity produces a deterritorialization experience where there is a perceived loss of the "natural" relation of culture to its physical and geographical point of origin. This sense of borderless communication is speeded up by new media technologies and the social media, creating the impression of an erosion of cultural borders and national-cultural boundaries, and so, arguably, national-cultural distinctiveness. Global celebrity colonizes the airwaves, enters the production chain, monopolizes media genres, and shapes and bends the very "content" of entertainment, politics, and communication right down to the everyday discourses that dominate everyday life.

Global celebrity can be argued to involve the global imposition of commoditized Western media products over what are seen as the fragile and vulnerable traditional cultures, particularly in the "developing" world. This can also be referred to as the "core-periphery model" where information, news and entertainment are seen to flow

from the West to the rest – “the rest” being unable to resist or reply to this domination because of power and resource inequalities. When such a model is driven and energized by the poetics and politics of celebrity it is seen to have particularly enchanted capabilities, its demystification so steeped in spectacle and wonderment that it simply cannot be resisted. The global celebrity status of Barack Obama is one such example, since he not only embodies the geopolitical power of the United States but his “change” and “hope” message was easily translatable and sellable across the world (Redmond 2010).

In Japan there has been the recent phenomenon of a form of *bihaku* embodiment that emerged among teenage girls who wanted to imitate the look of their favorite pop stars. *Bihaku* is a term, employed in marketing, which means “beautifully white” and was first coined in the 1990s with the emergence of skin-whitening products and cosmetics. The desire to have whiter skin has a long tradition in Japanese culture but has gathered force with the rise of global celebrity and its associated chain of products endorsed by idealized white celebrities such as Cate Blanchett. Pop stars such as Ayumi Hamasaki have taken on the glamour and appeal of white female stars and promote *Bihaku* products to solidify the sensory transnational relationship. In a conjoining chain of signification and commodification, youth subcultures such as the *Gyaru* girls take on the look, fashion and glamour reminiscent of Brigitte Bardot, including her blonde hair.

I notice immediately the intense dry heat. I look around. There are mud houses and goats. Anytime a UNHCR car passes children they smile and wave and some run alongside. (Notes from Angelina Jolie’s Sudan Journal, 2005)

Nonetheless, there is a second and alternative way to make critical sense of global celebrity, one that draws more fully on empirical data, ethnography, and close attention to exemplification and illustration. Arguably, when we actually begin to examine the impact of the global at the local level, rather than finding deterritorialization and cultural annihilation we find the creation of a new global-local nexus, involved in “establishing new and complex relations between global spaces and local spaces” (Robins 1997: 36).

The subcultural theory of identity formation suggests that young people, in particular, through a process of *bricolage* or the conscious mixing and blending together of different and diverse cultural items, transcode or appropriate those cultural items, wherever they may come from, for their own localized identity ends. In terms of the consumption of global celebrity, famous figures are not simply digested without transformation. To return to the *Gyaru* subcultural example above, one can read the appropriation of celebritized idealized white femininity as not simply a form of copying and incorporation but translation and transformation.

A similar subcultural group in Japan, the *Ganguro* girls, are in part defined by their dark, golden tans and blonde hair, reminiscent of “Californian girls.” However, it can be argued that *Ganguro* is a form of revenge against, and a rejection of, traditional Japanese social norms, hierarchies, and values. These subcultural groups form

close bonds, transcoding global celebrity culture and offering up an alternative to the isolation and constraints of Japanese society.

Global celebrity of course exists at more than one level: stars are born locally and make sense at the regional and national levels. They sit within the flows of national cultures and of media landscapes calibrated by regulations and processes “unique” to that space. That said, the global, transnational, glocal, and local operate in complex interrelationships: the modern landscape means that sheets of connections are constantly being made and remade. A local television personality can be suddenly thrust into the national and international limelight, can find their name becoming a meme on Facebook, or their “activity” can turn viral via YouTube hits and shares. Such was the case when Charlo Greene, a reporter for Alaska’s KTVA, resigned live on air to fight for marijuana legalization. She told viewers: “I – the actual owner of the Alaska Cannabis Club – will be dedicating all of my energy for fighting for freedom and fairness, which begins with legalizing marijuana here in Alaska. And as for this job, well, not that I have a choice but ... fuck it, I quit.”

Celebrity ambassadors also work in the interconnectedness of the global-local-global space: they are global entities whose images are tied to the national and international cause in which they register an interest. If they are at national level, they internationalize the issue, and if at international level, they authenticate the issue that needs to be resolved. Josh Hartnett and Global Cool (a charity that is trying to encourage 1 billion people to reduce their carbon footprints over the next ten years), Brad Pitt and Make It Right (an adopt-a-green-home campaign that he hopes will help to restore the Lower 9th Ward of Katrina-ravaged New Orleans), and Jay-Z and the United Nations Water for Life program (aimed at giving people worldwide access to clean drinking water) are all examples of this global-local-global interface. But celebrity ambassadors also localize the issue in the sense that their endorsements and trips on the ground resonate in the very spaces where that crisis is being played out. People who are hungry, fleeing a despotic regime, or who are trying to resist an outbreak of disease are given “hope” by the appearance of the celebrity (and news teams) at their front door – even if ultimately this is always inescapably a false dawn.

One and a half hours later. We drive back to the airport. On the tarmac many types of WFP planes for food drops. The sun is just rising. It looks like a vision of hope. (Notes from Angelina Jolie’s Sudan Journal, 2005)

The four chapters in this part explore the idea of global celebrity through different theoretical and empirical frames, across different media platforms, and with particular attention to the political and the ambassadorial. Both Ferris and Tsaliki undertake empirical work, the former addressing local television news presenters, and the latter, tweets in relation to celebrity activism. Cooper and Nayar examine the work of celebrity do-gooders, with Cooper employing the concept of the celebrity ambassador to examine such figures as Bono and Angelina Jolie, and Nayar addressing Bollywood celebrity in relation to charity and what is defined as vernacular cosmopolitanism. All four chapters look at the role celebrity has in

shaping local, national, and global relations, identifications, and the representations of self, cause, and the hopeful values of neoliberalism.

In “Recognition, gratification and vulnerability: the public and private selves of local celebrities,” Kerry O. Ferris draws attention to a gap in empirical work in celebrity studies, broadly, and in relation to local television news journalism in particular. Ferris argues that in gathering data directly from celebrity respondents, she is able to demonstrate the distinctive interactional dynamics of celebrity common to all media figures; how local celebrity and global celebrity interact with and reflect each other; and how the oft-theorized notion of the public/private split in the celebrity self is actually experienced by local celebrities.

In “‘Tweeting the good causes’: social networking and celebrity activism,” Liza Tsaliki starts from the position that the tweeting practices of celebrity advocates of activist causes – whom she terms *celebvocates* – remain largely under-researched and consequently underexplored and theorized. Her empirical research of celebrity activist tweets, then, is an attempt to provide analytical data on what activist causes are tweeted and with what type of share and impact. It is in this context that Tsaliki examines whether *celebvocate* tweeting can extend cultural citizenship and invest it with a more populist aesthetic, thus opening up new forms of political engagement. Tsaliki’s aim is to study the social impact and reciprocity among international celebrity twitterers, their activist causes and their followers. Hers is a hopeful and enabling assessment of the global role of *celebvocates*.

In “Celebrity diplomats: differentiation, recognition, and contestation,” Andrew F. Cooper discusses the way celebrity diplomacy – conceived as a distinctive subgroup of various forms of celebritized political engagement – functions within a complex set of geopolitical contexts and frameworks. Cooper suggests that their location as “hybrids, with the willingness to engage state-based officials but also the capacity to do so in a manner that is both attractive and relatively risk free, allowed this group of celebrities to gain some degree of privileged access to the decision-making process.” Celebrity diplomats are trusted, skilled operators, with enhanced political credibility that enables state officials to let them undertake specific diplomacy initiatives. For Cooper, they make themselves credible to what he defines as the club culture of diplomatic relations by demonstrating that they combine technical acumen with the ability to draw publicity to an issue by a sense of spectacle.

In “Brand Bollywood care: celebrity, charity and vernacular cosmopolitanism,” Pramod K. Nayar argues that Brand Bollywood Care (BBC for convenience) helps reframe India as a global nation state suffused with benevolent ethics. He suggests that “retaining yet subtly erasing racial, national and geopolitical identifications by merging with, in distinctive fashion, transnational organizations like the United Nations or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, BBC is a marker of India’s coming of global age by inserting its – India’s – most recognizable, that is, celebrity, faces into a global humanitarian project and semiotic universe filled with signs of benevolence.” However, Nayar is also at pains to express that a certain amount of legitimacy accrues to BBC due to its *vernacular* origins and roots. He uses the term “vernacular” fully alert to its racial and imperial roots, and to signal a binary with the “global” interface. As he suggests, “care and charity work are technologies of global

citizenship for the Bollywood star.” They are conduits of hope and bring hope wherever their benevolence travels.

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Recognition, Gratification, and Vulnerability

The Public and Private Selves of Local Celebrities

Kerry O. Ferris

While contemporary celebrity is usually conceptualized as a national and even an international phenomenon, celebrity exists on a continuum, and many of the interactional dynamics associated with celebrity also operate at the regional, local and hyperlocal levels. For example, broad recognizability is a central element of celebrity status (Ferris 2004). With this factor in mind, the category of “celebrity” may be expanded considerably, and comparatively minor media players – such as local newscasters, minor league athletes, or local politicians – may be defined as celebrities, at least within their local context. In this essay I focus on local newscasters to illuminate the distinctive interactional dynamics of celebrity common to all media figures, and investigate how local celebrity and global celebrity interact with and reflect each other. In particular, I provide empirical consideration for the oft-theorized notion of the public/private split in the celebrity self, as experienced by local celebrities.

While there is a large literature on television news, this literature focuses mostly on news content, ideological bias, and opinion formation (see for example Boykoff 2006; Dowler 2002; Fuller 2005; Hodgetts et al. 2005; Lens 2002; and Steele 1995) as well as news-gathering, presentation and production techniques (see for example Clayman and Heritage 2002; Ekstrom 2000; Hemmingway 2004; Raymond 2000; and Weizman 2006). Very little research has been done on the lived experience of television newscasters. What little research does exist tends to focus on the work lives of television journalists (see Aldridge 1998; Aldridge and Evetts 2003; Lee 2004), and in particular on their experiences of racial, gender, and other types of discrimination in the profession (such as Harper 1991; Kim 2006; Mahtani 2001; Tufan-Tanriöver 2000).

Analyses of journalists’ personal experiences, in particular their experiences of celebrity at either the local or the national level, does not appear in the scholarly literature. This information is most likely to be found in first-person accounts by journalist themselves and is abundant in a recent spate of memoirs by veteran

national-level television journalists (see for example Mudd 2008; Sherr 2008; Walters 2008; King 2009). While these autobiographical accounts address some of the issues that are interesting for this project, they do so in idiosyncratic and unsystematic ways, and so should not be relied upon as a sole source of data.

This project fills an important gap in the scholarly literature on celebrity by gathering data directly from celebrity respondents, something very few researchers have attempted. National and international celebrities and their handlers work hard to create barriers between the stars and those who want contact with them (Ferris 2005), and may be leery of participating in research because of privacy protection issues. Researchers may avoid even attempting access because of the problems associated with “studying up” the status hierarchy (Lofland and Lofland 1995; Ostrander 1993). Young and Pinsky (2006) are the only researchers to successfully utilize national media celebrities as research subjects, in their work on narcissism. The researchers enjoyed a rare level of celebrity access due to Pinsky’s position as both a radio and television personality and a research physician, and used distinctive methodological precautions to preserve their subjects’ confidentiality. My research bypasses the access problems national celebrities present by focusing on local newscasters, who are well known in their communities but who generally manage their own business affairs and do not have the retinue of bodyguards and other gatekeepers typical of national and international stars.

Except for Young and Pinsky (2006) and, later, Rockwell and Giles (2009) scholarly attention to celebrity selves has been largely theoretical. In particular, Rojek (2001) conceives of the celebrity self as a divided one, with a public version that is constructed for and by audience consumption, and a private version that Rojek calls the “veridical” or true self. While Rojek’s invocation of George Herbert Mead in this enterprise is a poor fit,¹ the notion of the two-sided celebrity self is useful for understanding the experience of those who work in the media spotlight but cannot escape it when they leave the office. If this theoretical construct is to be useful, we should be able to see the public/private split in the lives of both global and local celebrities.

I propose local celebrity as a specific type of Hills’s “subcultural celebrity” – a more narrow-cast version of celebrity, in which people are “treated as famous only by and for their fan audiences” (2003: 61). Hills uses this term to describe such smaller-scale celebrities as cult-TV actors (2003), TV producers-cum-bloggers (Chin and Hills 2008), and even some media fans themselves (Hills 2006), but in its broadest definitional sense the concept can cover a good deal of empirical ground, including the type of local celebrity I am interested in here.

Largely as a result of the rise in internet technology, there are more opportunities for celebrity, with smaller, more segmented and specialized audiences, and the prospect of more open awareness contexts (or what Redmond calls “ever decreasing circles of affective connectivity” (2006: 36)). Local celebrities may include newscasters, politicians and professors, as well as the lifeguard at the pool, the cashier at the market, and the waitress at the diner – people who are seen, recognized, and followed by more people than they can keep track of, and who hence experience relational dynamics similar to those of global, mass culture celebrities. (Blogs, Facebook

and Twitter also provide means by which ordinary people can have relationships with their fans, followers and audiences – technologically mediated, but comparable to those of bigger media stars.) Local celebrities are easier for audiences (and researchers) to access, to gather information about, and to connect with interactionally, which may alter some of the relational asymmetries associated with global celebrity. But it will be useful to see what those dynamics look like from an empirical perspective rather than a theoretical one.

This analysis addresses questions about the construction of celebrity in local settings, the dynamics of privacy and recognizability at the local level, and the dilemmas involved in balancing private life with public exposure. In this paper I will analyze local celebrities' experiences of fame and recognizability, their feelings about these experiences, and their understandings of what celebrity means in their own lives. Using interview data from small-market news anchors in the American Midwest, I focus on the relentlessness of recognizability, its burdens and benefits, and the fears it can generate among those who work in the public eye. The contribution of this essay to the field of celebrity studies lies in its focus on the lived experience of celebrities themselves. Ultimately, my goal is to be able to ask and answer these questions of global celebrities as well as local celebrities; given current barriers to the former, the latter are my focus here.

Methods

I conducted a total of 30 interviews with small-market television news, sports and weather anchors in the US Midwest. I distinguish anchors (those who provide introductions, segues, and commentary, and present stories from within the studio) from reporters (those who present stories from the field) because anchors spend more time on-camera and hence may be more visible and recognizable to viewers. Anchors may also do some reporting, often for special series, which serves to increase their on-camera time even further. Sports anchors, in particular, tend to do the most field reporting, and in weather there tends to be less field reporting to do, meaning that anchors present most material themselves from the studio.

In addition, it is important to note that each type of anchor has a distinctive frame within which they operate as they do their work: news anchors are expected to be mostly serious and neutral about the stories they present, while sports and weather anchors have more latitude to express individual personality and enthusiasm for their presentation material. This is particularly true for weather anchors, as evidenced by the historical and enduring clown-weatherman connection made by the legendary Willard Scott (1987). These distinctive frames will be revisited later in the analysis section.

I selected three small markets that are comparable in a number of ways. Each has a full complement of network news stations with daily local newscasts. Each media market serves a metropolitan area with a population of roughly 400,000 people, and each is classified as a "small" market by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. All are outside their state's one major media market.

Table 12.1 Proportions of television anchors interviewed by type and gender

	News	Sports	Weather
Female	9 of 30 interviewed = 30% response	0/0	2/5 = 40%
Male	6 of 17 interviewed = 35% response	8/16 = 50%	5/18 = 28%

In each media market, I recruited interview respondents by sending emails to all anchors (news, sports and weather; morning, afternoon and evening broadcasts) at each of the four local network stations (ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox). There was some overlap in two of the markets where the CBS and Fox stations were owned by the same corporations and utilized some of the same anchors for both stations' broadcasts. A total of 86 recruitment emails were sent, and a total of 30 interviews were ultimately conducted, for a response rate of 35 percent. Table 12.1 shows the total number of anchors by type and gender, along with number interviewed and response rates. It is interesting and important to note that, while there were almost twice as many female news anchors as male, there were no female sports anchors at all, and over three times as many male weather anchors as female. Only one of the respondents, a male news anchor, was non-white, out of a total of six nonwhite anchors, all in news, across the three markets. This was a largely male, largely white, largely news-oriented group of interview respondents.

In-depth interviews with the anchors were conducted in person and were recorded and transcribed. Where possible, observational data was gathered from newscasters' appearances at local public events, and from their daily news tapings. These data were recorded in the form of written fieldnotes. Other sources of data for this project included tapes of news broadcasts and other archival materials. The data were analyzed inductively using HyperResearch, a qualitative data analysis software package which has the capacity to code and analyze textual, visual and video data. Themes and patterns that arose from the coding process were developed using grounded theory methods (per Emerson et al. 2011).

Recognizability and the Public Self

For these local news anchors, the public side of their identity is subject to widespread recognition. That recognition has both benefits and drawbacks, each of which has ramifications for the private self as well. The celebrity self is public to the extent that it is recognizable. Small-market television anchors are in positions of extreme, and extremely localized, recognizability: they appear on television regularly (often daily, and sometimes multiple times each day), and when off-camera they carry out their everyday lives in smaller cities that focus and concentrate their recognizability in what may feel like unavoidable ways. While all social actors experience this public/private distinction (Goffman 1959), celebrity recognizability publicizes the self in ways that noncelebrity "civilians" don't usually experience.

“I’m kind of a big deal”

Local celebrities’ experiences of recognizability often begin before their careers get off the ground, with the acknowledgment that they are entering a high-visibility line of work. “I knew that when I signed up for it,” said one weather anchor, conceding that it was part of the job that he had to accept. This sentiment was echoed by almost all of his fellow anchors, who claimed they didn’t seek out the celebrity that came with the job, but rather resigned themselves to it. Interestingly, they often compared themselves to unnamed others who did seek out fame, with the implication that this was an objectionable motive for entering the profession. “There’s a lot of ego in TV,” said one male anchor, in reference to this group, with the implication the pursuit of fame to gratify that ego was an unsavory reason for being in the profession.

This proscription against desiring the glory that comes with celebrity makes it unlikely that anyone would admit to actually seeking it out. It is not surprising, then, that only one anchor confesses that he was attracted to the job not despite its visibility, but because of it:

I think that’s, that’s part of the reason why I wanted to do what I do. Because I wanted to people to know me. I don’t know about why, but I’ve always wanted to be known and popular, you know ... We joke about it, do the Ron Burgundy thing, I mean, “I’m kind of a big deal, you know?”

This male sports anchor confesses that he is among the broadcast journalists who enter the profession specifically because they want to be a “big deal” – they seek out and/or enjoy the idea of a radically public identity, one that is seen and consumed by a large media audience. His reference to Will Ferrell’s *Anchorman* character acknowledges that his colleagues see this as evidence of an overabundance of ego: he makes fun of himself the way others might.

Only one news anchor stated that she had no idea what kind of exposure her chosen profession would entail. While most of her fellow anchors acknowledged that they had to adjust to life with a recognizable public self, none were surprised by it. She, however, was. She later described herself as “naive.”

There are both benefits and drawbacks to the recognizability that comes with local anchor status, of course. But whether one enjoys it or not, acknowledging one’s recognizability is separate from believing that one deserves any special praise for one’s work. This sports anchor compares himself to other professionals with less recognizability but more impact:

[my] career is public in a way that other people’s isn’t, and ... you know, there are lots of people who do lots more important things ... but they don’t do it in the public spotlight, and so they don’t get appreciated the same way. And when I go to career day at my kids’ school and there’s a heart surgeon sitting next to me, but nobody recognizes the heart surgeon, I sort of feel, a little bit like I don’t deserve the attention that I get, because, you know, I can’t, you know, save anybody’s life. But, um, so why is, you know, reporting on high school sports, more valued, or more valuable or, sort of, more immediately rewarded than um, open heart surgery?

He admits that there are others who may deserve public acclaim or glory more than he does, and laments that he may be receiving it only because of his media visibility. The acclaim accorded to his public self in this account is largely unearned. In other words, anchormen may not be such a “big deal” after all. Here another, much younger, male anchor makes the point as well: “We’re not any, we’re not anything special, you know? We’re just, we’re good speakers, and you know, and don’t get nervous around the camera ...” They both distinguish recognizability from merit, admitting that the only thing that really makes them special is the fact that they can talk in front of a camera. Their public selves, then, may be less worthy than those of other professionals, an insight that can leave celebrities feeling empty (Rockwell and Giles 2009).

“Always on”

Mostly, anchors talk about the relentlessness of recognizability. While it’s true that at any given moment no one may recognize them, it is also true that at any given moment they cannot guarantee that no one will recognize them. They are “open people” in the Goffmanian sense (Goffman 1963) – they cannot ensure that they will remain unmolested in public. They know that some viewers expect public figures to be available to them while in public space.

They use a variety of expressions to convey their sense of constant availability to strangers – always being in “open season” or having to be “on” all the time. All report some version of this feeling, including this male weather anchor: “it seems to me like this is a 24 hour job, because you know we work here from 2 o’clock until 11 o’clock, but we’re still ambassadors of the station and you know representatives before, during, and after work ...” Recognizability makes their job a “24 hour job,” a demand that follows them from the office into their private lives. Unlike ordinary workers, who may have a “work self” that they can safely leave at the office, celebrities are expected to keep that work self – their celebrity self, their “image” – available to the public all day every day. Not just when they are on camera. All the anchors interviewed told stories about their recognizability following them home from the office, and some told stories about their recognizability following them away on vacations with their families, sometimes thousands of miles from home: “We were in Guatemala and someone [said], ‘Aren’t you?! I’m like, ‘No way!’ And then the year before that we had gone to Riviera Maya down in Mexico, and it was a kind of a remote resort and there were three families there from this area that knew us, and I thought, ‘Are you kidding?’”

This female anchor’s last question highlights her disbelief and disappointment that, even in her attempt to “get away from it all,” the pressures of recognizability followed. The burden of bringing a public, celebrity self along no matter where one goes was something that all the anchors interviewed acknowledged. With few exceptions, the experiences of recognizability reported by local news anchors are characterized as an unsought and inescapable aspect of their work that sets them apart from other professionals in ways that may not be deserved, but which cannot be denied.

The bright side

Local anchors appreciate that recognizability has benefits in their lives. Several said that, at the bare minimum, being recognized means that people are watching, which assures continued employment, as this female news anchor explains:

Anytime anybody recognizes me for the work that I do, it's a good thing, because if they're not watching, I don't have a job. From that standpoint, most of the time it's very very good. ... I enjoy the fact that people do watch, I appreciate them as viewers. You know, it's always good to talk to the people who essentially, indirectly, sign your paycheck.

Says a male news anchor: "You know, if they're going to take the time off to say hi then that's cool. It means they're watching and if they're not watching I don't have a job." Recognition indicates that people are at least watching, which is a kind of informal viewer survey that local anchors administer every time they enter public space.

Besides this most basic perquisite of recognizability, there are others as well. Sometimes local anchors acknowledge that they get things more easily or less expensively when they are recognized in public. Many talked about getting free drinks at bars, free coffee at Starbucks, and not having to show identification at banks, pharmacies or when using a charge card at a store. One woman even thinks her local celebrity helped get her out of a traffic ticket.

Most agreed that their high profiles meant that they could do more good than if they were ordinary citizens. All of the interviewees lent their celebrity to various hometown events, charity drives, and other good works. Recognizability in this case becomes a tool that can be used to increase fundraising success and raise awareness about important issues:

I get the opportunity to host sports events – basketball luncheons, stuff like that – or non-sports related, I've gotten involved with NAMI, the National Alliance for Mental Illness recently. I mean, you know, it's time well spent. I mean, folks are doing some good things, and if you want me to come and tell some TV sports stories, make some jokes, then by all means ... if there's something I can do to help another person's cause, then why not?

Another anchor also says:

the best thing is I think that you could do a lot of good just on namesake. Like um, charity work ... I get called in a lot, uh, I think it's really fun. I can go to like, I can go talk to kids in schools. And that's really rewarding to me ... to see some of the looks on their eyes, and that's a blast.

Finally, male anchors noted that recognizability had benefits in their romantic lives, in more complex ways than just allowing them to play up their status to get dates. One younger weathercaster noted that his high media profile allowed for greater scrutiny by women who felt the need to "background check" their dates: "So

then she goes and then she calls and she goes, 'I stalked you at your website' ... 'I read your profile. I made sure you were real, and you had video up there, so I made sure, you know, you were real.'" The woman in his account felt comfortable dating him because his high public profile allowed for greater verifiability – indeed, she eventually became his fiancée. A much older sportscaster tells of gauging women's response to his celebrity and using it as a way to separate the gold from the dross:

My wife didn't like the fact that I got approached by strangers in public, especially when we were uh, first dating. But then that was what made her different from other women. Um, the, my previous girlfriends had seemed to like it too much that I was the guy on TV, and that they seemed to like the guy on TV better than they liked the guy who was sitting in front of them.

Here he points to the differences between his public profile and his private self, and was able to filter out those who were only attracted to his celebrity.

There are benefits to local celebrity and its relentless publicization of self. Public selves allow local anchors to gauge the success of their own broadcasts (recognition confirms viewership), to enjoy certain benefits not available to ordinary citizens (free beverages, immunity for traffic violations), to administer romantic litmus tests, and to do good works with greater impact than ordinary citizens.

Recognizability and the Private Self

Local anchors struggle to maintain a boundary between their public, work-related celebrity selves and the private selves they bring to family, leisure and other nonwork encounters. They experience difficulties in this project that may relate to their location in smaller media markets, but may also mirror the dilemmas of global celebrities. Recognizability begets the possibility of recognition, and recognition begets the possibility of response. Responses that involve contact between local celebrities and their fans/viewers/audience members reveal a tension between gratification and annoyance; thankful for the rewards and opportunities that they receive, celebrities may still express frustration at having to accept contact from strangers who feel entitled to it.

"Sorry to interrupt ..."

While the behavioral default for fan-celebrity encounters involves the fan noting the celebrity's presence without actually approaching him or her (Ferris 2004), that doesn't mean that fans never approach celebrities. Indeed, many fans feel a sense of entitlement to contact with their favorite celebrity, which means that not only might they approach the star, but they might actually pursue him or her into their private life (Ferris 2001).

Local celebrities such as news anchors may experience more such contact and pursuit for a variety of reasons: they operate within smaller markets, which can concentrate recognizability and they are often on television daily. They also lack the buffers that global celebrities usually have access to – local newscasters don't have agents, managers, publicists, personal assistants, entourages or bodyguards to protect them from the advances of viewers. They take their own phone calls, open their own letters, answer their own emails, and do their own grocery shopping. They are almost never out of reach of their fans, and can almost never guarantee that they will not be approached.

This anchor noted that he is approached often with what he considers to be a false apology: "people are more bold, I think, than they used to be. I think that's probably true in all society ... I'll say this if they want to talk to you, they'll come up and talk to you ... 'Sorry to interrupt, but ...' But, well, they're not [sorry]." He doubts the sincerity of those who account for their approach with an apology ... since they do what they're apologizing for anyway. He implies that their approaches are unwelcome, or at the very least that they are irritating.

More irritating at some times than at others, apparently. This sportscaster explains his distinction between private time, when he resents the approaches of fans, and work time, when he accepts those approaches.

Like if it's, if you're trying to have private family time, if you're, you know, throwing the ball around at the park, or something like that, um, and somebody comes and interrupts you when you're with your kids, that somehow that's more objectionable than, you know, if, when the guy comes to talk to you at the [College] basketball game.

When out of the studio and in public space for work, he doesn't (or cannot) resent the approaches of others. But when having "private family time" in public space, he objects to the "interruption" that fan interaction causes. The same anchor suspects that, as a sportscaster, he is particularly open to the approaches of others because of the ubiquity of sports-related small talk between strangers, famous or otherwise: "It's less weird when strangers come up to me and say, 'Hey, how 'bout those Bears,' because I'm the sports guy, and sports is okay to talk about with strangers in public. Um, so the etiquette of sports talk is different."

While some anchors may be approached more than others because of their areas of expertise, others may be more likely to be approached in distinctive ways. Female anchors observed that audience members not only feel free to seek contact with them, but also to critique their style, their delivery, and even the choice of topics covered. But mostly, their style: one news anchor calls this type of contact "hair hate mail" and says: "They have this sense of ownership ... 'I accept you into my living room so I should be able to say what I want you to do and how I want you to look.'"

Women in particular express a sense of being targeted for criticism based on their looks, as this female newscaster also articulates:

I think women are judged in many ways much more harshly than men are, especially on physical appearance. [Her senior male colleague] could have a plastic fork in his

lapel, which he has on more than one occasion, because he forgot to take it out from dinner, and nobody will care. Ah, that's [just him], isn't he funny! If I did something like that, or like I said [wore] the wrong color, or [had] a bad hair day, which we all have, I'll hear about it for weeks.

Even their male colleagues recognize that women's on-air appearance is more important to viewers than men's, and some mentioned this in their interviews. "Um, maybe for a guy it's easier? For me it's easier ..." said one male newscaster, who, despite having a noticeable facial abnormality, reported never having to worry about viewers commenting on his appearance.

Interestingly, one category of viewer seems to get a special pass when seeking out contact with local anchors: the "special needs" viewers. Several local anchors had tales of "special needs" viewers who pursued contact – sometimes sustained and long-term – with them, but who were not seen as doing something improper:

[There's a] small clutch of special needs students, high school and college students, or I guess college age students. Um, who don't have the same grasp of the rules of interaction because of their special needs. And so, you know, treat me as if I'm a close friend because they see me on TV every day, and I'm willing to indulge that in a way that I'm, you know, not willing to uh, indulge [others] ... And a lot of times, their parents contacted me to sort of apologize and or, you know, say it would be really great if you would, you know, write him back, or call him back, or something like that. And I'm okay with that.

A female news anchor voices similar willingness to indulge a viewer with unspecified "special needs": "He lives in a home for assisted living, I'm not sure what issues he has, he's special needs, and I'm not sure what they are. He calls me every day. Every day. He just wants to talk to someone and tell them about his day. And so, I talk to him." This may be because "special needs" viewers are seen as less able to understand and/or conform to social rules. It may also be that they are seen as less threatening.

On Feeling Vulnerable

The combination of recognizability and viewers who feel entitled to contact can lead to a sense of wariness on the part of local news anchors. This sense of vulnerability links the public and private selves of local celebrities in a more unpleasant way than the gratifications of recognizability examined above. Vulnerability is experienced differently by males and females, but all respondents acknowledged that their recognizability exposed them to risks that, while not unique to celebrity status, are likely intensified by it.

Most male anchors expressed worry about only one thing: getting caught doing something stupid, especially in the age of social media:

I mean, everything is videotaped now ... So you gotta be extra careful. I'm not ever worried about that, but ... I mean, as I've gotten older I've calmed down. I mean I was like any other mid-twenties. I liked to go out to the bars and have fun, but there was never anything you know, that would have gotten me in trouble, anything like that ... But yeah, I mean, you kinda like, that was always just kind of in the back of my mind too. Don't be stupid and, you know, like ... You're in a photo, and that's one thing that's scary, is scary about Facebook sometimes. Um, you know, you get one bad picture in there, and that could ruin you ... Yeah, it goes viral! You can't get rid of it after that,

Some version of this concern was expressed by all male interviewees, who usually used the example of drinking and/or bar behavior to illustrate their points. For them, the cost of recognizability was largely paid in the form of having to be conscious about avoiding bad behavior in public. Social media technologies like Facebook and YouTube intensified their fear of being caught doing something illicit. Beyond this concern, one male anchor also worried about confidentiality at the doctor's office. But that was it.

Their female colleagues, however, rarely talked about getting caught doing something stupid. Their sense of vulnerability was linked almost entirely to fear of stalking. More than half of the female anchors had stories of obsessed viewers or stalkers, and several had been forced to seek assistance from law enforcement. Here is one news anchor talking about her experiences:

it first started with phone calls and asking me out and I say oh you know thanks anyway but I'm married you know whatever. Then he started coming to the station and asking to see me not knowing – at first we didn't realize it was the same guy. But then, he always used his name and then um someone tried to break into the station one night and after he had come out that day and and I didn't see him because by then it got to be kind of weird because – Then I was at a celebrity um it was a bowl-a-thon to raise money for some event ... So I got there and this guy came up to me said hey you (?) know the sponsor. I said great yeah what's your name? And he said his name and I was like oh boy. I recognized his name of course immediately by then because the harassment had been going on for a while. Wrote it down and said what's your address, wrote down the address, what's your phone number, wrote down his phone number. Got his signature. Had my photographer who was there get video of him and he was just watching me the whole time it was really creepy. So after that I um talked to the police. And ... then when I saw the detective who handled the case later too I asked him about it too I said whatever happened with – he's like don't worry about it we took care of it. So I still to this day – no idea. I think we're done, hopefully we're done ... I think he's moved on to somebody else.

Though she received reassurance from local law enforcement, her tentative sense of closure comes only from the possibility that he has moved on to stalk someone else.

Another female news anchor tells a similar story:²

There was a gentleman in the area who started a blog type thing on the internet and it was entitled how to stalk someone. And he picked me as his "victim," and he called

me “victim” and it was kind of you know like a how to of stalking. Let’s say you would want to stalk someone. I’m going to pick Val Scott from Channel 39. This is how you would do it ... it was pretty disturbing because he was say, you know, if you want to find out where they live, all you have to do is follow them home from work ... police tried to figure out who he was, but because it was kind of anonymous, it was hard to track him down. That was probably the scariest one because I didn’t know who this guy was and I thought OK, he’s calling me his victim and saying what he’s going to do, and he could do these things, or somebody else ... I work until 11:30 at night, it’s a really rural area out here, there’s so many cars in the parking lot you wouldn’t necessarily notice an extra one. The station had someone walk me out to my car at night, but ... so that one was a little bit unsettling, but he eventually stopped.

Her conclusion comes with a sense of resignation – there wasn’t much she could do to protect herself, and it’s over only because he stopped.

Women also express vulnerability on behalf of their children – they worry about how their own recognizability might negatively affect their kids, or even put them in danger. One news anchor cited a case in which a small-town newscaster in Michigan was murdered in front of her children, remembering it as a stalking (though it was ultimately the anchor’s husband who was convicted of her murder), and using it as a reason to keep her children from the public eye:

[I] was always concerned about my children ... so I took extra steps to keep them from being photographed ... even now ... my Facebook page wall is very boring [because there are no photos]. I’m very cautious, probably overcautious, but when you’re in this business you know the worst that can happen ... so you’re always mindful of that. And that’s how I carry my family life, having that in mind. Luckily, my kids have a different last name from me.

Only one male anchor confessed to having felt threatened by a fan, though the story he tells makes it seem like he worried as much for the rest of his co-workers as for himself:

We had one guy who ... he kinda went off the deep end, I mean he was pretty weird for a while, and I mean, try to sneak in the building. I mean, it wasn’t just about me though. It was just about being in here, you know, the allure of it ... He was told not to come back, and eventually he got the message. I was packing heat at the time, because I didn’t know what he was going to do. Yeah ... I’m probably paranoid. (laughs)

The sports anchor arms himself for protection, something none of the women admitted to doing. But he also laughs nervously at the prospect that he overreacted. This highlights the difficult position that all local celebrities find themselves in. Where is the boundary between a viewer’s gratifying admiration and a stalker’s frightening obsession? Says one female news anchor: “It’s difficult not to feel burdened by it.”

Conclusion

Local celebrities are more accessible, both to audiences and researchers, than global celebrities, making it easier to get at the meanings that their celebrity holds for them. For small-market news anchors, the meaning of their celebrity centers largely on its accompanying recognizability, which I argue is the fundamental interactional feature of all celebrity, local or global. Recognizability is an attribute with multiple meanings for local celebrities, with differences sometimes cutting along lines of gender. The question remains whether this research illuminates meanings common to both types of celebrity, or if the phenomena of local and global celebrity are different enough so as to not be easily comparable.

For most local television anchors, recognizability is something they knew they would encounter upon entering their careers. They knew that their high media profiles would place them in an asymmetrical relationship with their viewers – they would be known to many others who are not known to them. Most claimed to have chosen their career paths despite this aspect, rather than because of it. These findings about local celebrity generate interesting questions when contemplating global celebrity. Did those who found fame at the global level seek it out? Did they merely pursue their interests, with celebrity arriving unbidden as a result? And, particularly in the case of global celebrities, once fame is found, what level of effort is put into keeping it? How much time, money and energy (if any) are spent keeping big stars in the public eye? And finally, what happens when celebrity declines or disappears?

This recognizability opens the door for viewers to approach and interact with local newscasters through a variety of means. Web-based communication makes it especially easy for fans to interact with newscasters in virtual space, while small media markets increase the likelihood of fan-celebrity encounters in public space. While anchors claimed to welcome brief, positive interactions with viewers, they also commented on the unrelenting nature of their recognizability, and sometimes expressed exasperation at the fact that fans feel entitled to contact. Local celebrities, like global celebrities, can never truly guarantee an escape from the burden of their own recognizability. How do global celebrities see their own recognizability? Is it something they experience directly, or does their retinue of employees and entourage members soften its impact? Is it a burden or a benefit? Does that depend on whether they have pursued it, or whether it arrived unsought?

There are times when that recognizability becomes not only burdensome but frightening, though male and female anchors express very different sorts of fears. Male anchors worry about being caught doing something stupid in public – especially in the age of cellphone cameras and instant internet uploads. They appreciate that their reputations are on the line every time they go out in public, even (or especially) on their private time. But women's fears are more visceral. All of the female anchors told stories of obsessed fans or stalkers, and expressed fear for their own safety and that of their families. This suggests that the risks of recognizability are, at least in part and at the local level, gendered. And that, while there are

benefits associated with local celebrity, there are burdens as well. For global celebrities, is the threat of stalking and obsession even more frightening than it is for local celebrities? Does the presence of bodyguards and security consultants mitigate this problem for big stars? Are there any gendered differences in the experiences of global celebrities along these lines? Or does higher visibility “feminize” them all?

These data support the argument that recognizability is key to the interactional experience of celebrity, and that it links the public and private selves of celebrities in a way that is distinctive from those of ordinary folk. Recognizability is double-edged sword: it is the source of celebrities’ public glorification (Adler and Adler 1989), as well as the source of their private vulnerability. The public self and the private self sit on opposite sides of the interactional experience of recognizability in the experiences of local celebrities.

These findings about local celebrity are valuable in their own right, illuminating a social world that has not been much explored by social scientists. But they also suggest links to another under-researched area – the experiences of celebrities on the global stage. The imbalances of knowledge and power that result from these distinct interactional dynamics are, arguably, as problematic for local celebrities as they are for global celebrities – indeed, perhaps more so, as local celebrities such as small-market newscasters are unlikely to have the resources to protect themselves from approaching fans. While there are undoubtedly distinctive differences between the experiences of local celebrities and global celebrities, this is so far the only way in which it is possible to address the experience of celebrity from the standpoint of the celebrities themselves. For reasons already discussed above, this continues to be close to impossible in the case of global celebrities.

Scholars have finally begun to acknowledge that the concept of “celebrity” represents a system of symbolic and social power. This acknowledgment demands an attempt to identify and study those who, as a group and as individuals, embody that concept and personify its social and symbolic power. In particular, what are their lived experiences of celebrity like? How do they see their own celebrity? What is it like to be an “open person,” constantly recognizable and always interactional fair game? How do they view the relational asymmetries of their status? In this analysis, we begin to see some of these issues from the perspectives of those who live celebrity, where we had previously only seen them from the perspectives of those who consume and/or critique celebrity.

Notes

- 1 Rojek operates on what some would argue is a misinterpretation of Mead’s theory of the social self. Rojek appears to see the self as having two distinct elements (a private “I” and a public “Me”), while Mead himself intended a Hegelian synthesis between the subject “I” and object “Me.”
- 2 All names are pseudonyms.

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“Tweeting the Good Causes”

Social Networking and Celebrity Activism

Liza Tsaliki

Though it may true that “celebrityhood” is now part of a new cultural vocabulary – thus attesting to the pervasiveness of celebrity culture in our everyday lives – and that celebrities provide a common point of reference for us all, we have to appreciate that contemporary celebrity activism and charity is the result of a complex relationship between celebrities, the media, and their public. Celebrities establish a symbiotic relationship with the media by feeding them information on their latest release, romance, personal crisis and drama, while at the same time they take up an active interest in one of the “good causes” – whether that might be the Food Revolution, Occupy Wall Street, child soldiers, or landmines in Africa. Hence, once the publicity machine “hits” the individual celebrity, the good cause gets maximum exposure as well. So, alongside their role (back in the 1930s and 1940s) in the promotion of consumer capitalism and in teaching the lay public the proper attire, lifestyle, social attitude, and so on, stars have invariably been used as international ambassadors since the late 1950s of a variety of undeniably good causes.¹ Not only do celebrities become “ordinary” folks, like the rest of us do-gooders, but through the celebrity-in-the-public-service narrative, they articulate ideas about personhood in a postideological world (Marshall 2010). In this light, celebrities render the *consumption* of politics and activism – not just that of an extravagant lifestyle – an attractive imperative. They can be seen to instigate activist engagement and motivate public endorsement of their cause, while reinforcing their image as “doers of good deeds” (Tsaliki et al. 2011). However, although a lot has been said about celebrity activism (Cooper 2008; Thrall et al. 2008; Wheeler 2011; J. Bennett 2011), and although the role of social media, and Twitter in particular, in political participation has already caught academic attention, as I will discuss further below, and has become the zeitgeist of the day, the tweeting practices of celebrity advocates of activist causes (celebvocates) remain largely under-researched and invisible.

One of the few studies that have tried to assess the impact of celebrity advocacy in news coverage is that by Thrall et al., who assert that the assumption that celebrity advocacy leads to news coverage of the celebrities and the causes they stand for is gravely overstated (2008: 369). And although activist groups and causes linked to celebrities are more likely to make newspaper news, overall, a cause's celebrity association does not lead to extended news coverage for the activist cause itself (Thrall et al. 2008: 370). In fact, other factors are more important in attracting news coverage for the cause than celebrity star power, such as organizational size, reputation and funding ability (2008: 372). More significantly, even the most visible celebrity advocates in terms of media exposure receive very little advocacy-related coverage (2008: 374). Another study, on the media impact of celebrityhood regarding the Darfur genocide and the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, showed that unless there is an already established political, media, and public interest in a certain cause, and unless celebrity activism coincides with action *already* taken by civil society and political leaders, there is no sustainable media or public interest (Hawkins 2011).

Taking an analytical approach that allows for the personalization of politics and for celebrity performance (Street 2010), in this chapter I want to examine whether celebvocate tweeting can extend cultural citizenship and invest it with a more populist aesthetic, thus opening up new forms of political engagement. My aim is to study the social impact and reciprocity among international celebrity twitterers, their activist causes and their followers. At first, I address the repercussions of the proliferation of social media on electoral politics, and political participation at large, and raise some critical reflections regarding the assumed impact of social media on civic engagement and participation. I continue with a discussion of celebrity activism and related practices before I move on to my methodology. This is followed by my empirical study and my research findings.

Social Media and Political Participation

The point of departure for much theoretical and empirical work has been the different ways the internet has impacted participation in protests and activist events and the ways social movements and activists have tried to use it to strengthen and diversify their political action repertoires (W. L. Bennett 2004; van Laer and van Aelst 2010). In this respect, the social media have proved indispensable and well suited for a number of crowdsourcing occasions (e.g., the street protests during the 2007 wildfires in Greece, Tsaliki 2010), or for containing and controlling crisis situations, as in the case of the London August 2011 riots (Denef et al. 2013).²

In fact, internet technologies have been discussed as having transformed political action, for "the internet has permitted people in general and activists in particular to maintain multiple contacts and to hold various engagements for different causes at the same time" (Walgrave et al. 2011: 335). The role the social media (cellphones blogs, Facebook, Twitter) came to play within activist causes and protest movements is seen by scholarship as prompting new ways to think in common, to organize social

action, to make collective decisions, to exchange information and feelings, and to develop a collective awareness. Proulx (2011) sees in them "a process of politicization of an individual" and argues that the social media provide the support framework for the individuals (that they-are-all-in-this-together); in this way, the social media contribute to the creation of a multitude of public microspheres where people talk, coordinate and organize action.

Looking at the unprecedented success of the Put People First rally in London, the Arab Spring, the Indignados in Spain, Aganaktismenoi in Athens, and Occupy Wall Street in New York, Bennett and Segerberg discuss the flexibility and immediacy with which these personalized, digitally mediated collective action formations communicated simple political messages directly to diverse publics using Facebook and Twitter (2012: 742). They contend that such personal action frames spread through social media as people appropriate, shape and share themes of contentious politics. And while they also adhere to the variety of ways that social media enable personalized public engagement, alongside the familiar logic of "collective action," they write about "the less familiar logic" of "connective action" (Bennett and Segerberg 2012: 743). While formal, hierarchical organizations and structures feature in the first case, "connective action" is based on personalized content sharing across social networks. In addition, though these personal action frames may revolve around familiar concerns and issues (the environment, civil and human rights, gender equality), they seem to employ more personalized and individuated mechanisms for organizing political engagement than collective action frames do (for the latter are organized on the basis of social group identity, membership, or ideology). Bennett and Segerberg believe that this "logic of connective action" directly pertains to life in late modern societies in which formal organizations are losing their grip on individuals, and group ties are being replaced by large-scale, fluid social networks wherein social media play a crucial role (2012: 748).

Another large part of academic scholarship has been involved with the study of participation in political debate and elections on Twitter; for example, Golbeck and Hansen (2011) present a technique for filtering out the political preferences of Twitter account followers. They suggest that this can be used to sort information provided on tweets on the basis of similarities between audiences' political preferences and those of the users. Other research focuses on Twitter use by politicians, as in the case of United States Congress members; contrary to the lay public, US Congress members do not make widespread use of retweeting (RT) and hashtagging, something that indicates a forced or semi-adopted use of Twitter, an unwillingness to participate in the practice, or simply a lack of such knowledge (Golbeck et al. 2010).

Swedish research focused on the extent to which Twitter impacts on participation in public debate by studying preelectoral and postelectoral activity in the 2010 elections in Sweden; Larsson and Moe (2011) argue that Twitter activity is largely dependent on other mediated events, such as televised debates or media coverage of political rallies. And although, at first glance, Twitter contributes to a broadening of political debate in sheer volume, a closer look indicates that only a small minority of high-end users contributes most of Twitter activity. Not only that, but these

high-end users are politicians, or established journalists and bloggers, which shows that Twitter serves as an outlet for those who are more interested in dissemination of information (in the form of undirected messages) than in conversation. This also stands in the case of Twitter use in the 2009 German federal elections. Tumasjan et al (2010) studied the use of political hashtags in the German case, only to confirm that the Twittersphere proved less of a forum for political dialog than a channel for the dissemination of political opinion and news; such findings have been corroborated elsewhere as well (Honeycutt and Herring 2009).

Similarly, an Austrian study explored the way in which the political Twittersphere is organized and open for participation from outsiders (Maireder et al. 2012). It found that its central factors comprise well-established political professionals with their own dense network within Twitter; nonprofessionals sit on the edge of the network, but are in a position to contact professional actors, and take part in the debate, thus broadening participation in politics. From a users' perspective, Ampofo et al. (2011) examine citizens' Twitter reactions to what was perceived as discrepant public opinion polling during and after the second televised leaders' debate in the 2010 United Kingdom general election, in an attempt to understand changes in the ways news is produced and consumed outside the mainstream media.

The repercussions of the velocity with which the use of Twitter (and other social media such as Instagram) spreads have not escaped the attention of election strategists in the US, who see this filter-free emergent ecosystem as having a profound effect on campaign politics. In fact, campaign managers and advisors to both US parties are increasingly aware of how a minor gaffe or stumble can turn into a full-blown narrative in the blink of an eye because of Twitter-primed iPhones, and how the political news agenda has changed overall as a result (Hamby 2013).

Twitter affords personalized channels of communication and interaction, and in this way, I argue, it makes sense to expect that celebrity activist tweeting would be conducive to creating, if not a groundswell of *collective* support, at least a critical mass of cause- and issue-based *connective* action; Twitter's digitally networked action (DNA for Bennett and Segerberg 2012) would capitalize on the personalized social networking between celebvocates and their followers and among followers themselves to spread the word for the "good causes."

Reflections on Social Media's Impact on Civic Engagement and Participation

Still, there's scholarship that challenges the assumed impact of social media on civic engagement and participation (Cook 2012; Ellison et al. 2011; Enjolraset al. 2012; Lynch 2011; Morozov 2009; Fenton and Barassi 2011). For example, when discussing the "Arab Spring" and how the terms "Facebook revolution," "2.0 revolution," or "Googletution" were used to account for it, Proulx (2011) argues that such terms are not devoid of technological determinism. Instead, they reflect the determinist assumptions that were it not for the web 2.0 technology, there would have been no

social transformation in the first place. In this context, it only takes Facebook and Twitter in a given country for a social revolution to take place (should there be a need for one) (Proulx 2011). This is also echoed in Malcolm Gladwell's (2011) analogy of the revolutionary potential of social media to the dot-com bubble. Inasmuch as the rise of the internet and e-commerce did not revolutionize retail and proved to be less than life-changing, the fact that the protests in Tunisia and Egypt used the tools of social media does not mean to say that, in their absence, those uprisings would not have been possible.

Not only that, but the social media did not just "happen" during the uprisings. Instead, the insurgencies were the culmination of a long period of fermentation after years of dissent and efforts to change from below (Frangonikolopoulos and Chapsos 2012). It would be wrong, then, to interpret the uprisings as Twitter "revolutions," since long before 2011, the social media had played a significant part in communicating, coordinating and channeling the rising tide of change from below. The social media, it is argued, have not just alleviated the obstacles to the dissemination of information and collective action. They also created a shared meaning among tech-savvy Arabs under the age of 30, adept at employing new forms of communication in order to bypass state controls. Nothing could have happened, though, were it not for the people who were willing to be physically present in the streets, ready to put their own lives at risk, in order to insist their demands were met (Frangonikolopoulos and Chapsos 2012: 15–17).

Others, like Jodi Dean, attest to a contemporary collapse of democratic deliberation and struggle, despite the intensification of communication networks. Apart from the structural inequalities embedded within the proliferation of such networks, Dean argues that the abundance of information now on offer morphs into an apparent contribution, as people mistake their social media interactions for political action and participation (2005: 55, 60). In this fallacy of participation, "technology functions as a fetish covering over our impotence and helping us understand ourselves as active ... [and] relieved of the guilt that we might not be doing our part and secure in the belief that we are after all informed, engaged citizens" (2005: 62–3).

Similarly, Habermas seriously challenges the view that the social media are "free spaces" where opinions are negotiated and formed. Instead of reading the social media as a new public sphere, he points out that they tend to foreclose engagement in real collective politics while nurturing a "push button" politics that is inept as a social mechanism. The rampant proliferation of social media leads to the fragmentation of large but politically focused mass audiences into innumerable, yet isolated, public issues (Habermas 2006). In addition, the commercial nature of most social media means that unless alternative ownership models emerge, such platforms are unlikely to meet the Habermasian criteria for the public sphere (van Dijck 2012: 164). This resonates with Fuchs's assessment of Twitter, which is seen as a tool of the masses, the use of which is seriously compromised by social stratification in terms of age, ethnicity, class and educational level,³ as well as by its profit-oriented, commercial status (2014: 190, 200). With an asymmetrical visibility that works best for corporations and powerful figures, Twitter, Fuchs contends, hardly qualifies for a public sphere.

Celebrities in Politics and Activism

Celebrity political participation and activism has become an established academic debate and research interest for some years now – because who can deny the validity of awareness-raising for a benign cause (such as battling Third World debt, AIDS or child famine), no matter who speaks?

Some critics discuss how a person's celebrityness has been facilitated by the mediatization of their public persona, as a result of the industrialization of culture (Drake and Miah 2010). Others discuss celebrity politics as a means of commodification that neutralizes citizen/consumer engagement (Turner 2004). In fact, Turner describes the increasing visibility of the ordinary person as media content through celebrity culture, reality television, websites and talk radio as the "demotic turn." Although he accounts for the interactive web 2.0 culture, where the ordinary person is more producer than consumer, he argues that the media's democratic potential has been wildly overstated (2010: 126–33). Franklin discusses how politicians have "packaged" themselves as commodities to be sold to voters (2004), while Boorstin stresses how public interest in celebrity politicians and politicized celebrities is manipulated through pseudo-events (1971). There are those who opine that celebrities ignore and fail to understand the complexity of political matters, thus leading to the "trivialization of politics" (West and Orman 2003), and to growing skepticism regarding whether celebrity culture can contribute positively to political engagement (Couldry and Markham 2007). In this respect, celebrity politics is seen as the latest manifestation of the fame game, contributing to the PR-ization of politics (Louw 2005). Media coverage of celebrity politics thus creates a "spectacle" which "frames" politicians and celebrities alike as global "superstars" (Kellner 2010). The common thread in the above critical analyses of celebrity engagement with politics is how the ubiquitous growth of visual media results in rendering fame a tool with which to manipulate public opinion.

Various critiques of this normative paradigm point out that by perceiving political communication as a top-down process between political elites and a passive electorate, it disregards the polysemic readings that audiences take from popular culture, while ignoring at the same time the celebrity potential for forging new or alternative formations for civic engagement (Wheeler 2013: 11). John Street's account of celebrity politicians and politicized celebrities (2004; 2010) has systematically argued how the politicization of celebrities has assumed a "moral authority" and lends credibility to political agendas; he asks whether celebrities can use their reputations to reinvigorate politics and invoke an aggregated form of political agency. Within this approach, Corner and Pels were among the first who argued that previous forms of party allegiances have been replaced by a focus on postideological lifestyle, where aesthetics and personalities, rather than political ideologies, rule (2003). This is a very similar notion to Žižek's "post-politics." He argues that old ideological divisions are left behind and new issues are confronted based upon knowledge that emerges from people's needs and demands (1999: 198). In this sense, politics encompasses the micro-politics of the everyday, instead of being confined to specific institutional

fields. However, Žižek notes that this attunement with the everyday works to prevent politicization eventually.

We must not forget, though, that some causes and issues are better suited for celebrity involvement and endorsement (e.g., the battle to end child poverty and brutality), for their advocacy is "safe" in terms of celebrity image and of the politics involved – as the distinction between "heroes" and "villains" is clear-cut. Such causes are more amenable to developing unquestioned public support, regardless of personal politics (Tsaliki et al. 2011).

A way out of the polarity as to whether celebrity politics diminish or enhance democratic pluralism is offered by Marsh et al. (2010) who place celebrity political engagement within a broader context of citizenship, participation and equality. However, for celebrity (activist) politics to be of any value, celebrity politicians and politicized celebrities need to demonstrate ideological substance and provide clarity to meanings so that a real sense of connection with activist causes is possible (Wheeler 2013). Not only that, but celebrity personas need to be gauged not just within parliamentary politics but outside them, as well; in fact, we need to discuss their ability for mobilization of public support for issue-based campaigns and social movements within both institutionalized and populist politics (Wheeler 2013: 24).

Celebrity Tweeting

The internet has had an enormous impact on celebrity culture by creating a plethora of new outlets through which discourses of celebrity circulate (cue in the activity surrounding various reality and talent shows, magazines, blogs, celebrity-related websites with user-generated content, and so on). Additionally, through the social media interface, it has ruptured traditional understandings of "celebrity management" from a highly controlled and regulated institutional model to one in which performers and personalities actively address and interact with their fans (Marwick and boyd 2011).

Social media afford celebrities the construction of publics with which to communicate.

What makes them very much connected to celebrity is that as much as they are about an exchange and dissemination of thoughts and links to other media and on-line sources, they are a constitutive and organic production of the self. That self-production is the very core of celebrity activity and it now serves as a rubric and template for the organization and production of the on-line self, which has become at the very least an important component of our presentation of ourselves to the world. (Marshall 2010: 39)

In this respect, part of Twitter's appeal is the lack of intermediary mechanisms (such as personal agents and assistants, and other PR personnel) to broker access between celebrities and their audiences – resulting in the perception of direct access to the famous with "insider" information, selfies, and opinionated statements.

Still, we should not forget that this direct access may also constitute *managed* interaction *posing* as intimacy. This possibility of unmediated interaction gives the

illusion of equality between “us” and “them,” in the sense that we (the followers) are being granted an audience with (politicized) celebrities, wherein we can raise questions and express opposition to them and the cause they endorse – even vilify them; of course, this also means that both celebrities and their followers are being held directly accountable to each other for everything they utter (Marwick and boyd 2011). In this way, Twitter allows for the production of the public version of the private self – what Marshall calls the “public private self,” in which the private lives of celebrities are publicly exposed (2010: 45).

Given the recent academic and research attention surrounding Twitter and its communicative and political mobilization potential, as already discussed in this chapter, it is interesting to see to what extent Twitter can amplify the impact of a certain cause, and effect civic engagement. As celebrities “perform” politics in the same way as celebrity politicians incorporate performative elements themselves, what is the activist narrative afforded by celebrity tweeting?

What Happens Next, Then?

The study of Twitter may provide us with an alternative to normative understandings of the Habermasian public sphere, allowing for the inclusion of “affective publics” (Corner and Pels 2003) that engage in interest-based, ephemeral (as well as rational-critical) communication and multiple discursive interactions (Bruns 2012). I want to stay clear of any bipolar interpretations of social media either as trivialized tools for individualistic self-expression and social networking (thus leading to the decay of public communication), or as the determining agents in global public communication (thus celebrating unequivocally their democratizing potential) (Wheeler 2013). Instead, following Marsh et al. (2010), I see no reason why celebrities should not invest in their publicness and visibility to enhance civic engagement in activist politics, within an “equal citizenship” notion. After all, if the lay public engages in political activism, aren’t the glitterati part of the same civil society, and thus able to claim a role in advocacy as citizens themselves? In this sense, Matt Damon’s or George Clooney’s right to activism, as citizens, is no different from the right of any Joe Bloggs to political engagement.

Furthermore, as not all issues and causes have the same media exposure and coverage, perhaps the immediacy and visibility afforded by celebrity twittering will help bypass the agenda setting of mainstream media. Not only that, but with rising concerns that celebrity humanitarianism reifies relationships of inequity and dependence between the West and the rest,⁴ thus reinforcing colonial narratives, celebrity twittering may provide a healthy alternative to commercially driven activist initiatives (such as concerts and telethons). Furthermore, celebrity tweets can be read both as a performance of the self (“here I am standing for a good cause”), and as a political performance (“here I am endorsing a recognizable issue with material, ideological repercussions”).

In the light of all the above, and given (a) the exponential growth of Twitter use worldwide, (b) the proliferation of transnational celebrity activism, and (c) that so far

research has shown that the (political, at least) Twittersphere cannot safely be characterized as conversational, rather as more appropriate for the distribution of news and statements,⁵ in the research in this chapter, I expect that international celebvocates will be busy tweeting in order to raise public awareness of the "good causes" they have endorsed. I also expect that their followers will be quick to pick up the activist causes, and spread these "good causes" widely across the Twittersphere, retweeting and mentioning them among themselves, in a 2.0 rendition of the two-step flow of communication model.

Methodological Note

There are different ways to study the Twittersphere: by examining the @USERNAME (indicating that the message is intended for or somehow relevant to a specific user), retweets (RT) (referring to the practice of resending a tweet posted by another user), or mentions (@sign followed by a user ID); or, also popular, by studying hashtags (# in conjunction with a word or phrase that connects the tweet to a particular theme), where specific topics of interest and discussion threads related to them can be followed.

Although several case studies make use of Twitter's tagging system (#) to identify transmissions of interest (Bruns 2012; Bruns and Burgess 2011; Small 2011), this chapter takes a *user-centered* approach as the vast majority of tweets do not include hashtags. In this respect, tagged messages are the exception, not the rule (Hughes and Palen 2009; Marwick and boyd 2011). Not only that, but users generally tweet on a wide range of topics not necessarily represented by single hashtags (Maireder et al. 2012).⁶

Since the Twittersphere is not static but is instead a dynamic entity as discussions unfold, a list of keywords was composed which, in conjunction with the individual celebvocate Twitter accounts, provided the user-based approach needed for this chapter's illustrative study. The keywords were searched within Twitter's public timeline (October 24, 2013 was the assessment's start date and November 15 the end date) using the Twitonomy application interface. All celebrity accounts were manually verified,⁷ eliminating automated bots and nonconversational accounts. Unless otherwise stated, *all* celebrity tweets pertaining to the cause endorsed by said celebrity were considered for this study.

When it came to deciding which activism-related keywords to look for, I selected at first a number of "hot" social issues in the US and looked for celebrities in favor of them; these issues were immigration reform and gay rights (end of Defense of Marriage Act/DOMA).⁸ Following that, I visited looktothestars.org, a website that promotes itself as "the web's number one source of celebrity charity news and information ..." Working my way around this website as a researcher, activist and fan, I selected four out of the top 12 celebrity causes portrayed, which also constitute personal activist interests: *education* (featuring 282 charities and 1,010 celebrities), *poverty* (with 198 charities and 1,133 celebrities), *human rights* (142 charities and 1,025 celebrities), and *women* (140 charities and 610 celebrities, where I was

particularly interested in abortion rights.⁹ Insofar as this chapter follows a user-centered approach and is intended as an exploratory attempt at unpacking the intricate relationships between celebvocate twitterers and their publics, I then selected about a dozen celebrities out of those supporting each one of the above causes. In fact, most of the time, I used the list of the “top celebrities for this cause,” as portrayed by the website in each activist category, and then handpicked a few more from the long list of featured celebrities.¹⁰ The rationale was to end up with a mixture of international celebrities, male and female actors, singers, and performers from both sides of the Atlantic. Concurrently, at least one celebrity politician was featured in the process, following the way politicians have “celebritized” themselves so as to engage in more personalized and less ideological tropes of political communication; in fact, wherever possible, Obama’s twittering practices were examined in order to assess the impact of his “liquid celebrity” (Redmond 2010) on the mobilization of audiences disenfranchised by mainstream politics. It is for this reason that sometimes the number of celebrities (86 in total) examined varies slightly.

From an ethical point of view, researchers who draw from the Twittersphere are faced with complex ethical considerations regarding the private/public character of the information provided. However, all the tweets examined in this chapter were publicly available and discoverable at the time of writing and research, and thus, as published material, need no permission from authors to analyze them (Bruns 2012). In addition, it would be safe to assume that the data collected did not cover all relevant tweets, since some users would employ hashtags instead of @signs. Even so, the resulting collection of data provides a sound basis for analysis (Larsson and Moe 2011).

What we also need to take into account when discussing the impact of celebrity activist twitterers is the fact that the lists of followers on both public and protected accounts indicate only a *potential* audience, since not everyone who follows a user reads all their tweets. Given the various ways people can consume and spread tweets (with RTs, for example), it is virtually impossible for Twitter users to account for their actual readers. Yet, this inability to know the exact audience does not mean that tweets are seen by infinite numbers of people, because nearly all tweets are actually read by relatively few people (Marwick and boyd 2010).

Discussion of Findings

Through social media, celebrities construct a public self that is presented through a new layer of interpersonal conversation (Marshall 2010: 41). Celebrity is thus seen as a “performative practice” which “involves the ongoing maintenance of a fan base, performed intimacy, authenticity and access, and construction of a consumable persona” (Marwick and boyd 2011: 140).

In order to better study the performative practices of my selected celebvocates, table 13.1 organizes the six causes under examination in two categories: *welfare* includes “immigration reform,” “poverty,” and “education”; *rights* includes “women” (abortion rights), “end of DOMA” (gay rights), and “human rights.” It presents the

Table 13.1 Mapping of overall Twitter performance, October 24–November 15, 2013

Welfare		Rights	
	<i>Tweets/tweets per cause</i>		<i>Tweets/tweets per cause</i>
Immigration reform		Abortion rights	
B. Obama	10,278/ 103	B. Obama	10,278/ 3
A. Schwarzenegger	3,297/ 24	S. Bush	14,263/ 14
R. Dawson	9,537/ 23	R. Simmons	41,238/ 1
J. Leguizamo	7,347/ 5	M. Farrow	17,481/ 8
Poverty		End of DOMA	
B. Clinton	106/ null	B. Obama	10,278/ 3
M. Bloomberg	6,584/ 12	H. Clinton	28/ null
M. Farrow	17,481/ 30	M. Navratilova	15,306/ 25
J. Legend	5,905/ 8	M. Ruffalo	10,775/ 3
Education		Human rights	
B. Obama	10,278/ 67	M. Bloomberg	6,584/ 11
D. Cameron	5,459/ 31	D. Cameron	5,459/ 15
R. Simmons	41,238/ 76	W. Jean	25,818/ 23
J. Bieber	24,301/ 7	M. Farrow	17,481/ 93

twittering practice (total number of tweets versus number of cause-specific tweets) of two celebrity politicians against that of two politicized celebrities, selected as the higher ranking twitterers per cause. All featured celebrities are official spokespersons of the said causes.

Table 13.1 shows that although these celebrities use Twitter in general, they scarcely use it to raise public awareness or mobilize people about the cause for which they serve as spokespersons. Russell Simmons, Wyclef Jean, Justin Bieber and Mia Farrow are the top twitterers (they joined in March 2009, February 2009, March 2009, April 2009, respectively), yet their celebvocate twittering performance is found wanting: 76 education-related tweets and 1 on abortion rights from Simmons (out of an overall total of 41,238); 23 human rights tweets from Jean (out of an aggregate of 25,818); 7 tweets on education from Bieber (out of 24,301 tweets); 30 tweets on poverty and 93 on human rights from Farrow (out of a total of 17,481). Some celebrities are busier twitterers than others – for example, President Obama, out of a total of 10,278, has only 3 tweets on abortion rights and another 3 on gay marriage, compared to Mia Farrow's 93 tweets on human rights, or Simmons's 76 on education. However, in my view, these figures can hardly stand for a critical mass of celebrity advocacy. Instead, the above matrix indicates a disheartening use of Twitter for activist causes. Even President Obama's 103 tweets on immigration reform – the highest cause-related score in this table – cannot compensate for what I interpret as a limited celebrity activist engagement on Twitter

In table 13.2 we see how celebrity politicians (CPs) fare against politicized celebrities (PCs) in terms of their impact and interaction with others. When it comes to

Table 13.2 Interaction with followers as between celebrity politicians and politicized celebrities

	Followers	Tweets in total	Tweets analyzed (via Twitonomy)	Tweets RTed (absolute no. of tweets analyzed)	RTs of tweets analyzed (celebrity as user)	Mentions of tweets analyzed (celebrity as user)	Replies of tweets analyzed (celebrity as user)
Celebrity politicians							
B. Obama	39,104,122	1,0278	3,195	2,708	487	290	3
A. Schwarzenegger	2,903,445	3,297	3,186	2,450	625	1,804	125
L. Bush	98,927	244	244	239	3	14	1
M. Bloomberg	537,109	6,584	3,200	2,904	296	1,237	2
B. Clinton	1,265,685	106	106	101	5	109	19
H. Clinton	894,400	28	28	28	0	15	1
D. Cameron	2,485,996	5,459	3,199	2,220	971	1,158	33
Politicized celebrities							
J. Bieber	46,694,124	24,301	3,190	2,041	1,149	1,200	890
R. Simmons	2,952,414	41,035	3,191	1,983	1,058	644	266
J. Leguizamo	99,381	7,347	3,189	2,219	189	4,043	790
R. Dawson	432,999	9,537	3,175	2,196	732	3,871	1,037
J. Legend	4,925,560	5,905	3,187	2,342	650	1,818	955
M. Farrow	333,748	17,481	3,199	1,882	1,158	1,038	578
W. Jean	3,368,673	25,818	3,105	1,337	1,707	693	187
M. Ruffalo	58,086	10,775	3,158	1,501	1,193	1,909	1,082
M. Navratilova	60,108	15,306	3,195	1,253	355	2,313	1,802



Figure 13.1 John Legend tweets on poverty (From twitter.com)

assessing impact, CPs are being RTed to a greater extent (ranging between 70 percent, as in the case of D. Cameron, and almost 100 percent, e.g., Laura Bush and the Clintons) compared to PCs. The latter are being RTed between 40 percent (e.g., W. Jean and M. Navratilova) and 70 percent (e.g., J. Leguizamo and R. Dawson).

Among CPs, D. Cameron, A. Schwarzenegger, and M. Bloomberg are those who interact the most with their followers (seen in the number of RTs, mentions and replies they make), followed closely by B. Obama. From PCs, J. Leguizamo, R. Dawson, M. Ruffalo, M. Navratilova are among the most interactive twitterers. Overall, it looks as though PCs interact considerably more with other Twitter users compared to celebrity politicians.

Having seen how CPs and PCs perform generally on Twitter, it's interesting to see what happens when it comes to the causes endorsed. Looking at poverty, table 13.3 shows minimal twittering about poverty from both celebrities and politicians. Farrow has only 30 poverty-related tweets to show for a total of 17,481 during the period under examination, which may be more than double the number of Bloomberg's cause-specific tweets (12 out of 6,584), but is still too little an output. Arguably, everything is a matter of perspective, and Legend's 8 tweets on poverty have indeed been RTed 1,200 times, which indicates that Legend commands some influence as a celebrity, and so does Farrow (her 30 tweets have been RTed 1,303 times). In the particular example in figure 13.1, Legend appears to be prompting his potential audience – perhaps in a somewhat didactic tone – to take advantage of what is available “out there” in order to break away from the cycle of poverty.

However, when we look at Legend's almost 5 million followers, or even Farrow's over 330,000 followers, it seems that there's plenty of room for improvement. Bill Clinton, as a newcomer to Twitter (April 2013), tweets marginally in general and not at all about poverty. The other CP presented in table 13.3 has an even smaller buzz – Bloomberg's 12 tweets on poverty are RTed 218 times among his half a million followers. It would seem that the argument in favor of Twitter as a mobilizing, activist technology is not confirmed here.

Table 13.3 on human rights again shows small celebrity input on Twitter about the cause when compared to their overall Twitter performance, for how else can we account for Jean's 23 cause-specific tweets out of a total of 25,818? Even Farrow's 93 tweets (which may be significantly more than Bloomberg's 11 or Cameron's 15 human rights tweets, or her own 30 poverty tweets) look like a poor output within an aggregate of 17,481 tweets.

Table 13.3 Impact of celebrity activist twittering per cause

	Followers	Tweets in total	Celebrity tweets related to cause (no. of tweets)	Followers RT celebrity about cause (times)	Followers' tweets to cause (followers post celebrity about cause)
Poverty					
M. Bloomberg	537,109	6,584	12	218	23
B. Clinton	1,265,685	106	Null	Null	25
J. Legend	4,925,560	5,905	8	1,200	24
M. Farrow	333,748	17,481	30	1,303	19
Human rights					
M. Bloomberg	537,109	6,584	11	1,706	n.a
D. Cameron	2,485,996	5,459	15	290	n.a
M. Farrow	333,748	17,481	93	3,826	52
W. Jean	336,8673	25,818	23	2,420	23
Education					
B. Obama	39,104,122	10,278	67	76,230	49
D. Cameron	2,485,996	5,459	31	1,070	52
J. Bieber	46,694,124	24,301	7	59,098	47
R. Simmons	2,952,414	41,035	76	4,613	59
Immigration reform					
B. Obama	39,104,122	10,278	103	143,625	154
A. Schwarzeneger	2,903,445	3,297	24	1,205	24
J. Leguizamo	99,381	7,347	5	93	4
R. Dawson	432,999	9,537	23	313	26
Abortion rights					
B. Obama	39,104,122	10,278	3	5,535	n/a
S. Bush	837,417	14,263	14	1,547	28
R. Simmons	295,2414	41,035	1	70	11
M. Farrow	333,748	17,481	8	315	17

Nevertheless, these cause-related tweets are invariably RTed by followers, indicating that the mobilization impact of Twitter advocacy may be a matter of personality. In this respect, Mia Farrow's and Wyclef Jean's human rights tweets (93 and 23, respectively) are RTed significantly more times by their followers (3,826 and 2,420) compared to those of Michael Bloomberg (1,706 times) and David Cameron (290). However, in the case of CPs, there are numerous cause-specific posts directed *to* them by followers; this could imply that Bloomberg and Cameron may have mentioned something related to human rights in the media, which was then picked up by followers on the Twittersphere.

Table 13.3 on education further illustrates an earlier assumption about the extent to which celebrity impact on others depends on who the celebrity is. Barack Obama

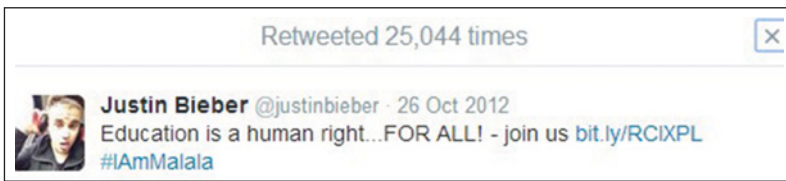


Figure 13.2 Justin Bieber tweets on education (From twitter.com)

comes across, once again, as an influential political figure worldwide – he has a substantial number of followers (over 39 million people), while his 67 education-specific tweets (out of a total of over 10,000 tweets) are RTed 76,230 times. Similarly, Bieber, although with only 7 tweets on education (in a total of over 24,000), has a strong buzz among his followers – those 7 tweets go a long way, for they are RTed almost 60,000 times. David Cameron’s 31 tweets on education may outnumber Bieber’s 7, but, apart from the fact that they constitute, in my view, “too little an activist output” in a total of over 5,000 tweets, they only get RTed 1,070 times. Although a celebrity and with no particular political agenda around the topic, Bieber’s impact might derive from the fact that he is young, and an influential figure worldwide. In figure 13.2, Bieber joins the international outpouring of support for Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani teenage school pupil who was shot in October 2012 because of her activism in favor of women’s right to education.

Immigration reform is generally high on the media and political agendas in the US. Table 13.3 shows that this is confirmed only in Barack Obama’s interactive activity (see example of tweet in figure 13.3). President Obama has the highest number of cause-specific tweets in the sample presented in table 13.3 overall, which are widely, and wildly, RTed – 143,000 times (and then some). Still, I would have expected more than 103 tweets, out of a total of over 10,000, on a flagship campaign issue such as immigration reform.

Being President of the United States is a reason in itself for Obama’s tweets on immigration reform to be vastly retweeted. In figure 13.3, he comes across as “presidential,” in the sense that he capitalizes on his authority as President to invite the audience to exercise their citizenship and disseminate further the message for immigration reform. On the other hand, no matter how much the rest of the spokespersons impact on other users in general, when it comes to this particular cause, the significance of their impact is considerably lower. For example, Dawson’s 23 tweets are RTed 313 times and Leguizamo’s 5, only 93 times.



Figure 13.3 Barack Obama tweets on immigration reform (From twitter.com)



Figure 13.4 Barack Obama tweets on abortion rights (From twitter.com)

Finally, the same tendency, that Twitter is not used as a mobilizing technology for activist purposes, is illustrated in table 13.3 as well. All four celebrities demonstrate limited twittering activity regarding the cause of abortion rights and an equally limited impact on Twitter’s public sphere. Once again, there are interesting differences among celebrities. Russell Simmons tweets a lot (over 40,000 tweets), has a lot of followers (almost 3 million of them), but could only make room for a single tweet upon abortion rights, which he endorses. Barack Obama’s 3 tweets on abortion rights echo more loudly across the Twitter sphere. For example, in the tweet in figure 13.4, he deconstructs Mitt Romney’s authority by making fun of his “Romnesia” – the case when Romney supports publicly something, only to completely revoke it immediately afterwards. These 3 tweets are RTed over 5,500 times, compared to Simmons’s tweet (70 times) and Farrow’s tweets (315 times), and are accompanied by limitless related posts to his account. Having said that, I am not arguing that this is an indication of increasing activism about abortion rights – just that users are posting to his account about them.

Table 13.4 demonstrates celebrities’ most popular tweets, when these relate to the celebrity cause advocated. These six tweets were the only advocacy-related ones found among the list of the most popular (86). This is interesting in itself, since it indicates clearly that celebrities may use Twitter – to a varying degree, as we’ve seen – but not necessarily for advocacy purposes. In addition, it seems that fans are not particularly interested in celebvocate twittering to begin with – otherwise, there would have been more than six cause-specific most popular celebrity tweets. Surprisingly, all six tweets come from politicized celebrities, which make the absence of celebrity politicians even more pronounced. Having said that, some PCs have greater impact than others, as we have already seen, with John Legend’s tweet on poverty having been RTed 5,379 times, and Rosario Dawson’s only 289 times.

Conclusions

This chapter identified a void in the study of celebrity culture and celebrity advocacy, and aimed at addressing it by taking a first look into the tweeting practices of celebvocates. It is premised on an analytical approach that allows for the personalization of politics and for celebrity performance, in an attempt to examine whether celebvocate tweeting can open up new forms of political engagement with activist causes.

Table 13.4 Most popular celebrity tweet

	Cause	Most popular tweet	RTs of most popular tweet	Total tweets
Susan Sarandon	Human rights	Situation in #Turkey spiraling! Join me & @amnesty and send message to Turkish authorities to end abuses now: bit.ly/12JFJn5	2,375	769
Charlize Theron	Human rights	We should live in a world with equal rights for everyone, without the government telling us who we can love. http://t.co/lbSX8QVIZ2	311	1,476
Mark Ruffalo	Human rights	If you hate what Snowden has done ... “The further a society drifts from truth the more it will hate those who speak it.” – George Orwell	3,983	10,775
Annie Lennox	Education	Women perform 66% of the world’s work, earn 10% of world’s income and own 1% of the world’s property www.wearequals.org #IWD #EQUALS	3,964	2,374
John Legend	Poverty	Romney lost his birthplace (MI), the state he governed (MA), the other states he has houses in (CA, NH) and his VP’s home state (WI)	5,379	5,905
Rosario Dawson	Immigration reform	Lets end racial profiling in NYC tonight. #PASS-theCSA #CommunitySafetyAct Children shouldn’t fear both criminals and the cops. Please RT!	289	9,537

Working within a notion of a celebrity performance of intimacy on Twitter (Marwick and boyd 2011), I thought that this kind of intimacy would facilitate fan base mobilization in favor of a certain cause; my research of celebvocate twitterers, however, showed otherwise. This may, indeed, give further credit to criticisms of “second order intimacy” (Rojek 2001: 52) or of an “illusion of intimacy” (Schickel 1985: 4) when talking about the (assumed) closeness between celebrities and audiences. Given that the (visual, semantic) information displayed on Twitter is the result of a strategic selection process, whereby the glitterati make conscious decisions about the kind and amount of information about themselves they share with the rest of the world, the limited supply of information and the limited motivation they provide for the activist causes endorsed is striking. Once we take into account that celebrity twitterers, in general, engage directly with their fans, the limited cause-based interaction becomes more disconcerting. In that respect, and although I share Street’s (2004; 2010) and Žižek’s (1999) views on post-political participation based on personality-bound engagement, there are reasons to suggest that Twitter doesn’t lend itself to cause amplification and public encouragement to adopt a celebrity cause – it could be that it simply pertains more to the mundane than the motivational.

Contrary to my expectations, celebvocate tweets fell short of becoming a sounding board for the variety of causes that politicized celebrities speak for. If we make sense of celebrity culture as an “impression management” (Goffman 1959) that takes place through an ongoing adjustment to perceptions of audience judgment, then we need to appreciate that celebrity twitterers perceive their followers as fans, and are thus forced to carefully assess the potential impact of their (activist) intervention; for it’s one thing to gossip frivolously or joke about dress malfunctions (Sofia Vergara, September 24, 2012),¹¹ and another to take a stance about a thorny political issue. Some fans may feel disillusioned after that and there are plenty of celebrities who tread carefully on this path. This counterproductiveness of celebrityhood’s close involvement with political causes has certainly not escaped academic attention (Wheeler 2013: 133). It seems that celebrities worry (too much) about inflicting self-harm as a result of being too political, and celebvocate tweeting can in fact be constructed in that way, as it exudes a notion of intimacy, immediacy and togetherness that is difficult to match. The immediacy and intimacy it offers leads to a first-person level social networking between politicized celebrities and their publics, holding the former personally accountable for what they say.

In addition, the amplification potential of celebvocate twittering is seriously compromised due to existing structural inequalities. For Twitter’s potential for social networking and activist engagement extends only to those who have access to it and the skills to use it. In that respect, Twitter can hardly be seen as a democratic medium (Fuchs 2014: 192). Social media are built around weak ties (Gladwell 2010), and although there is strength in weak ties – they create opportunities for people’s integration into communities (Granovetter 1973: 1378) – they rarely lead to high risk activism; instead, the latter is organized around strong ties. This, however, is not the case with Twitter, which is a platform where you follow (or are being followed by) people you may have never met. Since statistics show that Twitter is largely dominated by entertainment, and that politics is not particularly important to it (Fuchs

2014: 191), it is hardly surprising that celebvocate activism on Twitter does not generate a massive following.

So, although the fame game is being recalibrated across an expanding range of media sources, now including Twitter, it seems that celebrity political performance varies considerably; my research here on Twitter indicates we should be more cautious when making the case for celebvocate twitterers. For the question arises, is noninvolvement in cause-related interventions on Twitter connected to celebrities' inexperience in the conduct of politics? Is it a reflection of merely a performance of "activism"? Is it a tendency toward self-censorship out of a concern that they might "shoot themselves in the foot" if they become "too vocal" about a cause? Or is there something intrinsic in Twitter that makes it unsuitable and nonconducive to celebrity activist advocacy? Instead of reading celebrity Twitter (non)activism as "trivialization" of politics, perhaps it's worth considering whether activist mobilization and awareness-raising doesn't travel well on Twitter; 140 characters are not enough to convey the complexities of social injustice and other kinds of activism. For it would seem that Twitter can only afford a logic of "connective" rather than "collective" action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012) when it comes to activist civic engagement.

Notes

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- 1 American jazz stars of the likes of Duke Ellington, Dizzie Gillespie, and Louis Armstrong were used to promote a positive image of the US at the height of the Cold War. However, it wasn't until the United Nations appointed Danny Kaye as UNICEF's first goodwill ambassador in 1954 that celebrity engagement in international politics was institutionalized (Wheeler 2013: 144).
- 2 Social media became a contentious topic of public debate following the death of a 29-year-old man during an operation by the London Metropolitan Police to arrest him. British police forces not only saw a tremendous growth in the number of Twitter followers, but also engaged with the public on an unprecedented scale for the first time, using Twitter for communication and intelligence (Denef et al. 2013).
- 3 Fuchs describes the typical Twitter user in 2013 as being between 18 and 34, with no children, and a university degree (2014: 190).
- 4 There is a clear and present danger that events such as the 1980s Live Aid concert may (a) reinforce the impression that the developing world is a lost cause; and (b) have shaped the way we think international aid and redistributive justice should be realized. Celebrity-clad initiatives inevitably talk down to us and reinforce the status quo by erecting a wall between the people in need of help and those willing to help them (Njoroge 2011).
- 5 See, for example, Small's analysis of the hashtag "#cdnpol" – an abbreviation for "Canadian politics" (2011).
- 6 See, for example, how Honeycutt and Herring (2009) or boyd et al. (2010) examine the processes of Twitter conversations using @replies and retweets.

- 7 Marwick and boyd (2011) discuss the online signals that function as authentic identity cues, such as typos, first-person voice, posted candid snapshots and other cues that contradict the stereotype of the overly managed “celebrity” account.
- 8 Celebrities in favor of immigration reform came from <http://americasvoiceonline.org/blog/fedoras-for-fairness-showcase-celebrities-supporting-immigration-reform/> (accessed Apr. 2015) and the Voxxi website. Celebrities supporting gay rights (end of Defense of Marriage Act/DOMA) were selected from <http://www.glamour.com/weddings/blogs/save-the-date/2013/06/39-more-celebs-who-are-super-p.html> (accessed Apr. 2015).
- 9 In the category “women” (looktothestars.org/cause/women), abortion rights did not prove to be a very popular cause. Therefore, I also looked at <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/07/planned-parenthood-enlists-celebrity-help-to-fight-texas-anti-abortion-bill/> (accessed Apr. 2015) in order to complete the required number of celebrity twitterers.
- 10 After making sure they all had Twitter accounts, that is.
- 11 See <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2207986/Sofia-Vergara-Emmys-2012-wardrobe-malfunction-Modern-Family-stars-dress-splits-right-derriere-dances-night-away.html> (accessed Apr. 2015).

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Celebrity Diplomats

Differentiation, Recognition, and Contestation

Andrew F. Cooper

The amplified role by celebrities in global affairs has grabbed increased attention. Yet the notion that celebrities have taken on the status of diplomats – as opposed to the role of activists – is much contested. The classic definition of diplomats as “agents” of the state – and the national interest – would appear to exclude celebrities just as it does for all nonstate actors. Celebrities are not members of the traditional club of diplomats, with professional training and specialized skills of negotiation and communication. In terms of style, the juxtaposition between the stereotypical “spectacle” fixated world of celebrities and the discreet, publicity-shy world of traditional diplomacy could not be more extreme (Kellner 2010; Cooper et al. 2013). Whereas state-based diplomats are critiqued for being dis-intermediated or even “estranged” from society (Der Derian 1987), celebrities have taken on “mediated personas,” going over the head of established institutions to engage directly with the public (Corner and Pels 2003: 83).

This restrictive view has been challenged, however, both within the academic literature and within the practice turn. Hedley Bull’s classic definition (1977) does, to be sure, start off by defining diplomats as the preserve of state agents. But he opens the way for a much broader categorization by adding that diplomacy not only includes the conduct of official relations by states but “other entities with standing in world politics.” In terms of practices the role of celebrities – or at least one major subgroup of celebrities – has helped shape-shift diplomacy away from its select club culture toward a network mode of operation. This transition to be sure is far from complete. On the one hand, the main focus of constructive engagement between state-based diplomats and celebrities is in the area of public goods and/or humanitarian intervention. Issues of a hard security nature, as opposed to a soft public diplomacy orientation, are by way of contrast kept at arm’s length. On the other hand, not all celebrities have moved into a position where they can be deemed to have taken on a diplomatic role. As opposed to the forms of entanglement favored

by the core subgroup of celebrity diplomats – Bono, Angelina Jolie, and George Clooney – the options favored by alternative strands of celebrities fail to cross the line between activism and diplomacy.

Across a wider spectrum of activity celebrities occupy a number of subcategories. The entrance of celebrities into activism that are seeking only publicity – or perhaps more importantly, those *perceived* in this way – can become a source of embarrassment for international organizations and global causes (Cooper and Turcotte 2012). The United Nations has experienced instances of this with their selection of stars such as Geri “Ginger Spice” Halliwell, who seemed ill suited for the complex role (Cooper 2008: 29–30) and did not seem credible in the eyes of the public. In the same sense, shortly after her release from prison in 2007, celebrity-socialite Paris Hilton made an attempt at promoting the cause of animal rights and also planned a trip to Rwanda to draw attention to the plight of the Africa’s poor (Hammel 2007). However, the public’s apparent cynicism and dismissal of Hilton’s activities ultimately caused the trip to be postponed. Other celebrities including pop superstar Madonna have had mixed results trying to balance their public and private personas alongside social causes. Celebrity alone is not enough to make a personality a credible activist or mobilizer.

At the same time, the impulse for celebrities to associate themselves with serious issues even when they do not have a serious track record of doing so is matched by the willingness of advisors to push them in that direction. In December 2011, Kim Kardashian went to Haiti, just after ending a brief 10-week marriage to basketball player Kris Humphries. And although there could be no doubt that this trip was opportunistic as opposed to a genuine humanitarian effort, as one Hollywood consultant notes it meshed with a well-entrenched PR tactic: “It could be as simple as: we need you to start doing things that make you look sacrificing and compassionate” (quoted in Colapinto 2012).

Another subcategory extends to those celebrities who resist making accommodation to the dominant diplomatic culture. Unlike those celebrities willing and able to enter into sustained contact with state officials at the apex of global power, these resisters either stigmatize the performance of hegemonic governments and/or attempt to transform the policy agenda. Illustrative examples of this category of actors include Harry Belafonte, Sean Penn, and Mia Farrow. In some cases this activity is mobilized toward a specific issue, as with Penn on the 2003 Iraq invasion and Farrow on Darfur and the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

The unlikely foray of the erratic, larger-than-life personality of basketball player Dennis Rodman to meet North Korea’s “dear leader” Kim Jong-un reveals how far antidiplomacy can be stretched. Rodman’s intrusion into affairs of state was certainly naive. However, at least at the outset, an argument could be made that it had at least the advantage of bringing an unfamiliar and risk-oriented perspective to an apparently intractable problem of international relations, much like “ping-pong” diplomacy did in the changing context of China–US relations (Cooper 2013). Unlike Penn or Belafonte – or indeed Jane Fonda, portrayed over decades as “Hanoi Jane” – Rodman had no association with militant tendencies. If his life took bizarre twists during and after his years playing basketball at the professional level, his motivation has

always been self-promotion and commercial gain, rather than any sense of political commitment.

For its part, the North Korean regime has favored nonpolitical cultural modes of interaction with the West. The New York Philharmonic played in Pyongyang in 2008, and another son of Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-chol, campaigned for a 2007 tour of North Korea by Eric Clapton, a music legend who famously questioned the iconic “celebrity diplomats,” like Bono and Bob Geldof, for moving beyond music (Cooper 2008:12).

The sense of short-term opportunism is amplified by Rodman’s image not as a free agent such as Penn and Belafonte but as a pawn in the sophisticated publicity approach engineered by Shane Smith, the founder of Vice Media, who has showcased the notion of “the beginning of a dialog” with North Korea in tandem with the approach of a new television “newsmagazine.” The outcome for Rodman was predictable, as he became stigmatized even more than other antidiplomats; after all, he applauded a regime that runs gulags amid widespread mass hunger, calling its leader “awesome” (Cooper 2013).

In other more authentic cases, advocacy took the form of a structurally directed resistance. Belafonte epitomizes the more radical stream among celebrities. Appearing with Venezuela’s president Hugo Chávez in a 2006 meeting, Belafonte condemned President George W. Bush while praising Chávez’s Bolivarian Revolution. He added that “Not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of the American people ... support your revolution” (Associated Press 2006).

The smaller subgroup of core celebrity diplomats can be differentiated from the larger cluster of activists, however, because of both the recognition and contestation they receive as accommodationists within the established diplomatic culture. At first glance, this subgroup has some commonalities with the wider cluster of activists. No less than the celebrity activists, celebrity diplomats can be located as possessing the attributes of those labeled as highly ascribed as opposed to achievement oriented (Rojek 2001). As Joseph Epstein cogently puts it, from this perspective, “celebrity” must be distinguished from “fame”: “Fame, then, as I prefer to think of it, is based on true achievement; celebrity on broadcasting that achievement, or inventing something that, if not scrutinized too closely, might pass for achievement” (2005: 9). This distinction is important to note when analyzing the differences between celebrity diplomats and diplomats who have become household names. A celebrity – even those such as Bono, Angelina Jolie and George Clooney – can be famous for being famous or for also having some discernable “talent.” Fame by way of comparison can be achieved by some notable diplomats – Richard Holbrooke comes to mind for his work on, for instance, the 1995 Dayton peace agreement concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina – without an accompanying level of celebrity.

In a variety of other ways, however, the subgroup of celebrity diplomats are unique in their hybridity. While positioned as insiders, this group is not entrapped within the hierarchy of established institutions. Indeed their space for maneuver – while far more restricted than the wider activist cluster – is far greater than the earlier generation of “ambassadors” for selected United Nations special agencies such as Danny Kaye and Audrey Hepburn who were far more conformist in their behavior. With

more personal power and awareness, celebrity diplomats understand the reciprocal value that their involvement in policy discussions can have: “one reason for the new-found global agendas of celebrities is simply that today’s stars have more autonomy than previous generations” (Drezner 2007: 23).

Celebrity diplomats can contribute to an increased amount of attention on an issue- specific basis. Celebrities “can reach into people’s lives and speak to them in ways that Oxfam [and other] spokesmen cannot,” says Phil Bloomer, head of advocacy for Oxfam UK, “they can reach out to people who might not normally listen to what Oxfam [or another advocacy group] has to say” (quoted in Ford and Goodale 2005). It is this ability, being so intertwined with the cultural imaginary and able to address members of the public, that provides celebrities with a pulpit. Yet, by engaging with state officials within the established diplomatic culture, the celebrity diplomats enhance elements of the status quo. They can also serve to demobilize other forms of activism in its various forms.

What has emerged, therefore, is a fascinating synergy between the general trajectory of diplomacy and the specific positioning of a core group of celebrities to take advantage of this dynamic. In conceptual terms, a variety of academics – most tellingly some who have had extensive experience with “official state-based diplomats – push the boundaries well beyond the definition laid out by Hedley Bull. Richard Langhorne and William Wallace have argued, for example, that “diplomacy has spread to many other entities and across many categories of people” (1999: 21–2). Geoffrey Wiseman has called for the recognition of the concept of “polylateralism” with respect to diplomacy (1999: 2), an approach that takes into account a wider set of relationships involving not only disparate organizations but individuals “with global interests.”

Their location as hybrids, with the willingness to engage state-based officials but also the capacity to do so in a manner that is both attractive and relatively risk free, has allowed this group of celebrities to gain some degree of privileged access to the decision-making process. In terms of attractiveness, the group of celebrity diplomats offer enhanced political credibility for state officials in taking specific initiatives. At the same time, unlike other forms of activists, the celebrity diplomats do so without excessive problems related to miscommunication and severance of trust.

While there is adaptation in the culture of diplomacy, with a bending albeit not a breaking of the club ethos toward broader networking, there is a fundamental altering of the way the celebrity diplomats operate. To make themselves credible to the club culture – unlike other subgroups of activists – the celebrity diplomats had to demonstrate they combined technical acumen as well as the ability to draw publicity to an issue by a sense of spectacle.

The Practice of Celebrity Diplomats

Focusing on practices allows us to better capture the elements of both stability and change in an area such as diplomacy (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 18). On the one hand, practices are the vehicle of social reproduction. Thanks to their patterned nature,

they create the conditions for ontological stability in everyday life. On the other hand, as performances, practices are the vehicle of change and innovation.

What is most salient about the top-tier celebrity diplomats is that they all to some extent reproduce elements of club behavior. Bono, Angelina Jolie and George Clooney have all gone through some extensive training. Bono worked with the Jubilee campaign for the eradication of debt, before establishing DATA/ONE. In doing so he has continued to work closely with Jamie Drummond, the global strategist for Jubilee 2000, who became the executive director of DATA/ONE. Angelina Jolie was originally mentored by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) before moving to a hybrid role operating both within the culture of the UN and as a freelance activist. George Clooney has worked with a variety of experts on peacekeeping, and Sudan/Darfur more specifically, most notably John Prendergast, the co-founder of the Enough Project.

Linking process to substance to further refine the line for separating the few celebrities who can be termed celebrity diplomats from activists is their scope of activity. The top-tier celebrity diplomats do not focus on only one geographically focused issue. Rather they engage in mainstream diplomatic activities – communications and negotiations – with some degree of global reach. Bono has attended a number of G8 summits (of the seven major industrialized nations and the European Union together with Russia). Jolie went inside the green zone of Baghdad, as well as the inner circles of Washington, DC. Clooney has focused on Sudan/Darfur but has also has gained access to policy-makers in a range of other countries extending from the US to India.

At the same time, the collective approach of celebrity diplomats also extends the trajectory of networking. Diplomacy is explicitly intertwined with themes such as soft power and the use of the media, both as a means of making statecraft look outward more effectively and to diminish the dynamic in which, under forces of globalization, distance between citizens and sites of power has widened. Quite self-consciously official diplomatic culture has been developed without the formation of solid links to domestic society. As noted, the language of estrangement has been invoked to describe this state of disconnect (Der Derian 1987).

Celebrities therefore provide a convenient surrogate for, and a conduit in response to, the traditional bonds that hold society together, performing a mobilizing, interpreting and most importantly mediating function that has been eroded within traditional institutions. Consistent with the speed and uneven pattern with which these pressures are applied, application of this role seeks out shortcuts to bridge the gap between expectations and capabilities among individuals and authority structures.

At its most effective, celebrity diplomacy enhances the brand of an institution, as witnessed by the use of an increased number of stars as ambassadors for the UN. Celebrities and their advisors also know how to tap into the soft media, unobtainable by traditional diplomats. Very few diplomats become media stars, and those who do are stars only on CNN, the BBC World Service or other mainstream outlets. Celebrities have access not only to leaders but to mass publics. Celebrities are able to benefit from the preferential attachments that they have with members of the public and their messages are received more easily. In this sense, “preferential attachment is

the process wherein links are made not because of random factors, but for specific, determinate reasons” (Hands 2011: 112).

Finally, top-tier celebrities know how to network in a diverse and systematic fashion. As noted, a number of celebrities are prepared to work in and through clubs - whether the UN or G8. Nonetheless, this is not their natural habitat. They prefer networks. Often these networks privilege other celebrities, as the “guild” experience is shared with others from the Hollywood or the musical networks. In other cases, though, these networks move into different worlds. In some cases this means a focus on transnational connections, including members of diasporas, or key individuals from the global South. In other cases it means linking up to the business world, often with individual entrepreneurs with their own celebrity status, whether Bill Gates, George Soros, or Warren Buffett.

Mobilization and Elevation as State-Based Responses to Celebrity Diplomats

The recognition of celebrity diplomacy as opposed to simply activism depends on the form of agency from those individuals in the entertainment world. However, it also relates to the relationship forged between government leaders/decision-makers and those same celebrities. If celebrities are to be taken seriously, they must be granted standing.

A wide number of cases can be located where states want to use celebrities for their own purposes. The US has long been an advocate of this approach going back to the Cold War era (Davenport 2009). African-American jazz musicians were mobilized most notably as ambassadors of the American way of life – touring both the Communist bloc and nonaligned countries.

Nor are these initiatives restricted to the past or to the US. India has seen the attractions of mobilizing the star power of Bollywood as part of its own brand. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh laid out a whole new role for Bollywood in 2008, noting that India’s “soft power,” especially the film industry, could be put to use as a key tool of foreign policy. “The soft power of India in some ways can be a very important instrument of foreign policy. Cultural relations, India’s film industry, Bollywood ... I find wherever I go in the Middle East, in Africa, people talk about Indian films,” Singh told a group of probationary members of the Indian Foreign Service (*Indian Express* 2008). Singh elaborated by stating that soft power was not only a means of “influencing the world about the growing importance of India,” but that it was also in the wider context equally important in the new world of diplomacy.

The debate about how and where to leverage this source of influence was animated further by two revelations in WikiLeaks. The first of these highlighted the desire by the US to recruit Bollywood film directors to fight the “war against terror” within Britain’s Muslim community. Washington, it is reported, sent two senior diplomats to London in October 2007 amid growing concern about the rise of radicalism among Muslim youths in the UK.

Moving outward from radicalization in the West, the US expressed interest as well in utilizing Bollywood on the front lines. A second WikiLeaks revelation highlighted the fact that US diplomats suggested to India – without success, it should be noted – that it mobilize Bollywood stars to tour Afghanistan to help international efforts to stabilize the country. A cable published by *The Guardian* (2010) laid out the trail with regard to “specific, concrete ideas for opportunities for India to use soft power in helping Afghanistan’s reconstruction.” US officials stated that Bollywood was an area that “seems ripe” and that “We understand Bollywood movies are wildly popular in Afghanistan, so willing Indian celebrities could be asked.”

These types of episodes provide evidence that celebrities have been taken seriously by state-based diplomats. Nonetheless, they do not elevate celebrities to the standing of diplomats themselves. Celebrities are assets to be mobilized or even manipulated for concerns about national interests. They are not treated as equals in the diplomatic process. Indeed celebrity diplomats have the luxury of not having to represent a nation-state or intergovernmental institution. This distinction means that celebrity diplomats are able to focus on causes as they see fit without having to clear their positions with their host governments. However, this independence does create drawbacks in terms of the representation that celebrity diplomats can claim to have. Whereas state-based and institutional diplomats can approach situations claiming to represent the interests of their country and public at home, celebrity diplomats must cultivate their followers and any associations or representation that they claim may be subject to challenge from national governments.

The best case that can be found for celebrity diplomats being granted standing equal to diplomats of the highest standing came at the 2005 Gleneagles G8 in Scotland. At this summit Bono and Sir Bob Geldof were welcomed like visiting heads of state, gaining coveted bilateral meetings with UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, US President George W. Bush, and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. A similar dynamic played out at the 2007 Heiligendamm summit in Germany, where the celebrities grabbed much of the spotlight. In the lead-up, both Bono and Geldof met privately with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on more than one occasion, and are credited with some influence in persuading her to include issues of growth and responsibility in Africa on the agenda. As at Gleneagles, both celebrities used personal and shuttle diplomacy. Both had access to, and what appeared to be a high comfort level with, President Bush on the first day of the summit.

Although the core of Bono’s G8 activities was directed at the leadership level – he maintained a strong relationship with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, whom he had met at the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa in Italy – he also took a more comprehensive approach. In the wider context of the G8, he penetrated at least one of the Sherpa meetings concentrating on drawing up the agenda and communiqué for the Gleneagles summit. Much of his power of attraction for the G8 leaders was the expectation of a positive appraisal.

Akin to classic diplomats, Bono was also able to adapt to new conditions. This shift was discernible by Bono’s absence from G8s after the financial crisis. At the Heiligendamm G8 in June 2007 Bono was everywhere. He participated at a packed press conference with Bob Geldof and Kumi Naidoo from Civicus, the umbrella civil

society organization. He gave interviews with the BBC and other media. Finally he took center stage at the Voice against Poverty rock concert in Rostock. With him came a large and skilled entourage of advisors from his organization ONE and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Oxfam International.

Post-2008 Bono gave more attention to the G20: the putative hub of economic diplomacy due to the inclusion of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and other big emerging states, including Mexico, the host of the 2012 summit. In an interesting shift, Bono met with President Felipe Calderón of Mexico just weeks before the Deauville G8 in France to ask him to make the fight against poverty central to the G20 agenda. Speaking after the meeting, Bono said:

Next year Mexico will chair the G20, the annual get together of the most powerful leaders on the planet. Obama, Hu Jintao, Sarkozy, Angela Merkel, Jacob Zuma, Dilma Rousseff, they'll all be flying in. By the time they fly out, we want them to have agreed specific decisions, which we know will save and transform lives in the poorest parts of the world. As the host, President Calderón will set the agenda, I asked him to persuade the G20 to take bold action on the fight against corruption globally, on improving healthcare, and on boosting agriculture around the world.

Such a reposition is consistent in turn with the tactics adopted by ONE and Oxfam International, with a greater emphasis on working via the G20 countries from the global South as well as the traditional establishment contained in the G8.

The elevation of standing is the hallmark of all the top-tier celebrity diplomats. In a similar fashion to a number of other celebrity activists, Clooney has a UN affiliation, as a Messenger of Peace. Indication of his degree of access came on his trip to India in January 2008 with the UN Assistant Secretary-General from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to discuss India's contribution to this UN activity. Akin to the other top-tier celebrity activists, Clooney uses his star power and official designation to lever access with key state officials. Foreshadowing his later success in the US, Clooney gained personal meetings with key officials on his trip to India – the Defense Secretary, officials at the foreign ministry (who even hosted a party for Clooney at the Taj Mahal hotel) and a regional Army Command Headquarters at Jaipur.

In a well-publicized cover story at the time of the ultimately successful referendum in South Sudan, *Newsweek* (2011) labeled George Clooney a twenty-first century statesman. Not only did the article showcase Clooney's pivotal role in achieving this decisive result after many decades of fighting, it implied that these activities served as a catalyst for the so-called Arab Spring.

To be sure, not everybody has been convinced. As might be expected, there continue to be instances of outright dismissal of Clooney's efforts. Skeptics have been dismissive of any celebrity efforts of an issue-specific nature – whether on Sudan or development. Conservatives have continually torn into Clooney, targeting him as a classic liberal grandstanding star over his head in a dangerous neighborhood. What is new is the negation of Clooney's efforts but by committed activists with long experience in the East African region, who complain that the attention devoted to

Clooney hides the complexity and the span of time of the struggle. This resentment is far from surprising, and echoes the disapproving sentiments among civil society and humanitarian workers, who feel their day-to-day efforts have been upstaged by celebrity interventions.

Yet, despite these signs of backlash, this sort of twenty-first century diplomacy is not just simply about a big individual grabbing the spotlight, but about extended networks that can deliver results. Clooney used his star power to animate collective action through an improvised script: selective forms of access to key decision-makers (including face time with both President Obama and Vice President Biden), protracted cross-partisan and cross-cultural/religious lobbying, a sophisticated knowledge of both traditional and nontraditional media, and repeated personal visits to the region.

All of this work is flavored by a marked display of flexibility, highlighted by Clooney's pragmatic but controversial shift in focus of activity from Darfur to the cause of South Sudan. In style as well as substance, Clooney displayed considerable caution, relying heavily on mentors both in terms of general strategy (using many of the techniques pioneered by Bono and his ONE organization on development) and tactics. Behind Clooney's work stands John Prendergast, whose "insider" experiences have included serving as director of African affairs at the US National Security Council during the Clinton administration.

Clooney embraced an innovative form of cyberdiplomacy through the launch of the Satellite Sentinel Project, an initiative with a host of partners, including the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme, the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Google and the internet firm Trellon. The project monitored the border between North and South Sudan. Such techniques allowed – among other things – physical evidence of atrocities occurring on the ground to be located.

If not the repertoire of an enthusiastic amateur, this does raise the bar of expectations. Unlike traditional state-based diplomacy, this approach does not operate at its best in the shadows of secrecy. Any misstep by commission or omission attracts commentary.

Certainly, this high profile but informal mode of public diplomacy takes attention away from front-line workers – and indeed the incoming government of South Sudan, led by Salva Kiir Mayardit. It does so, however, without building a rigid and competitive sense of hierarchy and institutionalized status.

The danger for Clooney remained the risk of overexposure at a time of triumph. Wisely, instead of grabbing the spotlight at the independence ceremonies for South Sudan (or, for that matter, the flag-raising at the UN in New York), Clooney chose to stay away. Even celebrity diplomats need to demonstrate tact and discretion, allowing other actors quite rightly to share the spotlight.

Finally, Angelina Jolie has displayed a high degree of professionalism in her repertoire of activities. Akin to the other top-tier celebrity diplomats, Jolie has placed a premium on access to key decision-makers. On a 2008 trip to Baghdad, representing the UNHCR, Jolie had a 30-minute meeting with the top US commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, and Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, to discuss issues related to displaced people and humanitarian relief.

Her itinerary also included meetings with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and senior Iraqi government officials, as well as with UN representatives, Iraqi employees of the US embassy in Baghdad and a number of internally displaced people. Nor is this a one-off episode. In 2013, Jolie also teamed up with UK Foreign Secretary William Hague as part of a G8 initiative to address sexual violence and harm to women in war zones.

One of the most under-recognized areas of celebrity diplomacy and celebrity activism more generally relates to who advises this category of performers as to what roles or issues they should take up. The traditional answer focuses on institutions. When we look back to early celebrity activists, the UN acted as the core mentor organization. UNICEF stands out for the efforts of pioneers such as Danny Kaye and Audrey Hepburn. This approach continues to operate with a breadth of operation that is impressive, albeit with some issues of quality control. This route is still the first option for many stars when they want to get involved. A good indication of this attraction is the choice of refugee issues for Angelina Jolie via UNHCR.

What is fascinating over the last few years, however, has been the fragmentation of this advisory role. Although it is still important, the UN no longer has a monopoly. Major celebrity activists have been influenced by advisors with backgrounds in other forms of organizations, notably NGOs. The relationship of Jamie Drummond, the Executive Director of ONE, and Bono jumps out because of their prior involvement with the Jubilee 2000 “drop the debt” campaign. Another strand comes from experienced foreign policy experts who straddle a number of advisory roles. A good illustration of this type of person is Morton Halperin. Long associated with a set of leading think tanks based in Washington DC, such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Brookings Institution, Halperin acts also as a consultant to George Soros’s Open Society Institute and as a board member of ONE.

Some other consultants focus on specific issues. John Prendergast is arguably the best known of this type of advisor, coaching and navigating a number of celebrities (including Don Cheadle, Javier Bardem and Ryan Gosling, as well as George Clooney) through the complexities of dealing with African issues such as Darfur.

But the phenomenon that bears more scrutiny is what can be termed freelance advisors. Some of these are extremely well-connected Hollywood insiders. A prime example is Donna Bojarsky, a political consultant close to the Obama administration, who runs an influential Foreign Policy Round Table, encouraging the entertainment industry’s leaders to be engaged with international affairs and the role of the US in the world.

Another striking illustration of this trend is Trevor Neilson, who has mentored a large cluster of stars, with Angelina Jolie as one of his first clients. In another sign of the intermingling of club and network diplomacy, Neilson first met Jolie in 2005, after he had been recruited by Richard Holbrooke to be the executive director of the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS. Although Jolie subsequently moved on to other advisors, she was Neilson’s first major client as he built up his firm, the Global Philanthropy Group, as an explicitly commercially oriented operation with a fee for service. As Neilson defined the model he pursued:

When it comes to engaging the public around complex problems, celebrities are powerful – whether we like it or not. When you look at the amount of news people consume that's entertainment-focused versus foreign-policy-focused, you realize that if you can use celebrity to have people pay attention to the famine in Somalia, then they're going to pay attention. And, if you don't, they're not. (Colapinto 2012)

Elaborating on the Contested Nature of Celebrity Diplomacy

Detractors of the phenomenon of celebrity diplomacy highlight how the actions of some celebrities are merely attempts to engrain and promote their individual importance and remain in the public eye. Others contend that celebrities are not the proper vehicles for conveying and addressing complex issues, arguing that “there is a case to question the legitimacy of celebrities to speak with authority on development and other international issues” (Dieter and Kumar 2008: 262).

From a traditional diplomatic perspective, the effectiveness of celebrity efforts is called into question by focusing on the limits of their influence. Certainly celebrity diplomats, and celebrity activists more widely, engage not in the big issues of security but in the “low” issue areas pertaining to economic and social issues. Yet, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that celebrities have moved into a position where they are doing everything and everywhere. As with the “new diplomacy” associated with mixed coalitions of small/middle states with NGOs around landmines/International Criminal Court (ICC)/small arms/child soldiers, celebrities have picked their niches.

Another area of contestation about celebrities concerns their autonomy. Instead of viewing celebrities as club/networked actors in their own right, some critics view them as co-opted individuals: or what Bianca Jagger, in an article for the *New Statesman* in the UK, termed “sleeping with the enemy” (2005). Seen from this alternative perspective, the dots are connected up in a very different fashion than the image of a networked spanner of boundaries. Instead of privileging the dynamics of Bono's own hub via DATA/ONE and other activities, the exclusive focus is on what is taken to be the cozying up behavior toward Bush, Blair and the G8 summit.

Such a view, nonetheless, plays down the subtle nature of Bono's approach. His mantra is to continually play key political leaders off against each other, balancing intense involvement with an eye to keeping the boundaries of access open to as many as decision-makers as possible. Nudging and cajoling goes hand in hand with maintaining a presence in core policy circles. Public rebukes are reserved for the smaller players or those on their way out of power. The G8 summit provides a state-centric target. The World Economic Forum, best known for its annual meeting in Davos, provides the core site for deepening the logic of the network society.

The potential problem with the Bono network is not the intrusion into public space. The bilateral relationship Bono forged with Bush and Blair – and his privileged access with Geldof at the Gleneagles summit, both physically (via helicopter) and symbolically (in terms of their presence at the communiqué signing) – may indicate an appreciation of the mobilization, channeling, and mediation role highlighted by the sociological theory. But it did not create a crisis in governance in that Bono's

meetings were media driven and hoisted on the back of the unique Live 8 “mandate” that a message on debt and development assistance be delivered to the G8 leaders.

The greater potential difficulty with the network encompassing not only Bono but the Gates Foundation (infused with the astronomical gift of \$31 billion plus from Warren Buffett) and the Open Society Institute is not the dynamics of its relationship with state officials at the apex of power but the nature of its own inner workings as an expression of the ascendancy of private authority over global public policy. The unbundling of the state and the filling of the role of a filter or conduit between citizens and sites of authority by the intrusion of celebrities is one thing. Questions about accountability and the representative form of this network with its privileged access not just to policy-makers but the mass media, with its combination of popular legitimacy and massive material resources, are another thing entirely.

Moreover, from a structural perspective, the work that celebrities do in advocating for changes in domestic and international circumstances does not address deeply embedded inequalities in the international economy but seeks to address issues that are easily describable and apparent to the public while also not threatening the status quo at large. Quite clearly, the efforts of celebrity diplomats reflect the structures and institutions of a world that is in a variety of ways still West-centric (Marsh et al. 2010; Goodman and Barnes 2011). To challenge the activities that celebrity diplomats undertake, then, is to highlight not only the limits of orthodox diplomatic culture but the ways in which global culture in the twenty-first century is structured and how the public at large is implicated within these systems.

The Wider Salience of Celebrity Diplomacy

The ability of celebrities to mobilize activism in a hypermediated time is not a clear or straightforward case. As described above, celebrities’ relationships with the public at large are based upon an intricate and complex milieu of social, cultural, economic, and media flows and forces. The privileged position that many celebrities maintain in the cultural imaginary provides them with impressive access and the ability to influence public opinion. Routinely seen on television, the web or other media platforms, celebrities have a stage from which they can articulate their opinions and/or advance their positions or interests from an advantageous position. Cutting through the complications associated with negotiations and protocol, celebrities can connect immediately with a range of audiences, providing a multitude of connections to a global audience that would have been beyond the imagination a few decades ago (Street 2010; Wheeler 2013).

Celebrity diplomats, albeit a small subgroup among celebrity activists, combine mobilization for specific causes while working within the structures and institutions of mainstream society. As witnessed by George Clooney’s efforts on the Sudan referendum and Angelina Jolie’s push on the Iraq refugee issues, celebrities have ramped up the scope of their activities in terms of tough cases. Yet, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that celebrities have moved into a position where they are doing everything and everywhere. For celebrities their niches are in particular areas – above

all in areas of public goods. These niche areas have become more pronounced by the contradictions of diplomacy itself. To the question of “who are diplomats?” the possible current response is both everybody (NGOs, firms, citizen groups and so on) and an increasingly narrow group of individuals (usually located in the central apparatus of government, via the White House, Prime Minister’s offices, etc.). Both trends open up huge opportunities for celebrities. If diplomacy is “everybody” and “everything,” celebrities would appear to have a huge head start. They not only have the advantage of name recognition but they can channel media focus onto their activities in a way that very few NGOs and firms can. If diplomacy is moving toward a concentrated state based on “big” men and women, why does this shift have to be located inside government circles? Why can’t diplomacy be opened up to equivalent actors not fully embedded in the state? This expanded cohort would include celebrities intermingled with representatives from the business and NGO realms.

In either case celebrities can pick and choose tactics between the standard top-down repertoire favored by state officials – including personal and/or shuttle diplomacy – and a bottom-up approach associated with such initiatives as the anti-landmine and the ICC campaigns. Celebrities can act as creative hybrids, copying practices from other arenas while putting their own spin and media-savvy knowledge into the mix.

The blend of public diplomacy and advocacy both through official and unofficial mechanisms reinforces these advantages. At the cutting edge of the morphing of diplomacy in the twenty-first century is a greater emphasis on dialog with diverse audiences through a myriad of channels. Yet, as in standard areas of diplomacy, most of the official mechanisms remain truncated by the need for protocols, etiquette, the subordination of delivery to process, a continued fight for resources and claims of the national interest. Unofficial public diplomacy – epitomized by celebrity diplomacy – suffers from none of these deficiencies. Celebrities can be agile, contradictory, outrageous and insulting. They also have in an individual capacity – or through contacts – the money, and in some cases, a store of backroom talent who can micro-manage events and initiatives.

Celebrities provide a different script about how diplomacy is practiced that in a world of complex networks and an appreciation of public diplomacy and soft power cannot at all be dismissed as simply idealistic. On the contrary, the subgroup of celebrity diplomats have figured out far more successfully than their professional counterparts how a sophisticated form of public diplomacy can be operated. Direct appeals with a sense of spectacle to a massive public audience form one strand in this approach. If, as John Ruggie (2004) notes, a new form of competition has taken shape in the global public domain in which state and nonstate actors vie with each other for attention and imagination, celebrities are well situated in this struggle. For their repertoire consists of an attractive blend of direct expression well anchored in norms and expectations, and with a dynamic density. But in parallel with this focus on discourse goes a concerted effort to open doors to as many elite policy-makers as possible. This script works to the letter of a model proposed by some leading advocates of transformation, in which the essence of public diplomacy is taken to be “lobbying and policy exchange organizations which link up ... across borders ... creat[ing]

public space ... engaging with the domestic politics of other countries ... to change public opinion" (Ruggie 2004).

The major question will be whether the small cluster of top-tier celebrity diplomats will expand – allowing a fresh sense of energy combined with a repertoire of enhanced substantive content. As rehearsed through this chapter, Bono, Angelina Jolie, and George Clooney must be differentiated from the wider array of activists. But is this shape-shifting approach a model that will be replicated by others from the world of entertainment? Only with the infusion of new actors building on the "professional" script will the seriousness of the phenomenon of celebrity diplomacy be consolidated, dispelling the image of highly personalized performances by a small number of stars. Yet, pointing to the possibility of celebrities as a "growth industry" in the practice of diplomacy reveals how much the orthodox assumptions about the future trajectories of global affairs have been altered by the activities of these pivotal individuals within the nonstate constellation.

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Brand Bollywood Care

Celebrity, Charity, and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

Pramod K. Nayar

The Hindi film industry, commonly called “Bollywood,” has since the 1990s, as Ravi Vasudevan points out, been “reframing ... the nation-state”; “rather than the territorial nation ... we witness the emergence of the global nation” (2008; see also Sinha and Kaur 2005; Bose 2006; Kavoori and Punathambekar 2008).¹ This essay argues that one way Bollywood achieves this reframing of India as a global nation is through the creation of a globally viable, respectable and recognizable *brand*: celebrity care. Brand Bollywood Care (BBC for convenience) is a brand in and of itself. Retaining yet subtly erasing racial, national and geopolitical identifications by merging, in distinctive fashion, with transnational organizations like the United Nations or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, BBC is a marker of India’s coming of global age by inserting its – India’s – most recognizable, that is, celebrity, faces into a global humanitarian project and semiotic universe filled with signs of benevolence. While this line of argument suggests a homogenization, even mimicry, of Western ideals and agendas of benevolence, charity work and development models, a certain amount of legitimacy accrues to BBC due to its *vernacular* origins and roots. I use the term “vernacular” fully alert to its racial and imperial roots, and to signal a binary with “global” here. The reiteration of the vernacular is *not*, let me hasten to add, an attempt to claim greater authenticity for the project of BBC. I wish, rather, to suggest that the legitimization integral to any charity work, in the case of BBC, is achieved by drawing attention to its *local* roots.

This essay is primarily concerned with the discursive constructions of celebrity humanitarianism, of BBC, my generic name for India’s globalized film celebrity working for international goodwill, charitable causes, and the alleviation of at least some of the world’s lingering malaises. Care and charity work are technologies of global citizenship for the Bollywood star. My contention here is that a global citizenship is available for Bollywood celebs, whose origins lie in a “developing nation,” through the discourses of care, compassion and charity operating at local levels but

which resonate with similar discourses across the world. It is a citizenship that, as David Jefferess (2013) with a different emphasis and inflection argues, aspires to a postracial, culturally plural “signature” of modernity in the form of benevolence. Bollywood Care, while sounding suspiciously like a jingle for insurance or a medical facility, is a brand name that partakes of this shared aspiration – shared across cultures, races, nations, united by common concerns toward the suffering Other – and retains the uneasy balance between local and translocal, local and global in a form of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

After establishing a case for reading the Bollywood celebrity as vernacular cosmopolitan, the essay turns to specific steps in this construction. It locates, first, a discourse of antiquity in the claims made by Bollywood celebs about their humanitarian interests, suggesting that their global role was always already anticipated and prepared for in their local one. Second, it examines what I have called above the “uneasy balance” in the discursive construction of the vernacular cosmopolitan that might be theorized as a double move, of an interesting *iteration* of local history and activist practices and a simultaneous *erasure* of or detachment from an imperial history of benevolence leading to a certain unavoidable Manicheanism.

Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

Rahul Bose, Bollywood star, heads The Foundation, an umbrella organization running numerous projects for education, mainly for children from India’s Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Its tagline is “a *world* without discrimination” (emphasis added).²

Bollywood stars exemplify a vernacular cosmopolitanism as it has been defined by Pnina Werbner (2006), among others, as one that is rooted in a particular place but has the potential to move outward into the world. In celebrity modernity, the condition of celebrityhood is *portable*, across geopolitical borders. If mobility itself is a condition of modernity (as John Urry’s work (2007) seems to suggest), then Bollywood stars are part of a celebrity modernity where benevolence becomes the vehicle for global circulation. Vernacular cosmopolitanism, then, is the combination of local specificity with universal concerns. It is the effect of a certain *portability* of celebrityhood and the celebrity body (about which more later). In other words, the vernacular cosmopolitan as embodied in the Bollywood global celebrity is an instance of the metamorphosis of the national popular into the global popular.

The stars’ vernacular cosmopolitanism begins, first, as an instantiation of the national popular. The national popular is, clearly, the mass appeal of their films, faces and fictions. Indianness is itself constructed around Bollywood – which is frequently referred to as “Indian” cinema, although this implies an erasure of regional language films – and its fictional-mythical rivalry (such as that among the three Khans of Bollywood: Shahrukh Khan, Salman Khan, and Aamir Khan).³

The film from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), *One Life, No Price* (whose production team is Indian, and which is scripted by Dr Sunita Krishnan, a renowned activist against human trafficking), is an excellent example of

vernacular cosmopolitanism. First, of course, are the conditions of cultural production: Indian events, Indian expertise and endorsed/sponsored by the United Nations, now available on the global internet via YouTube. Second, various Bollywood stars give voices for the film. Third, the instances depicted, based on real life stories but enacted for the film by actors, are all Indian. But after these Indian instances have been documented the statistics provided are not Indian: “1.2 million people are trafficked throughout the world each year” (from the UN Population Fund, 2006). The revenue generated is “9.5 million dollars ... each year across the world” (US government estimate, 2006). Only then is India “fitted” into the global statistical narrative: “300,000–500,000 children in prostitution in India” (UNICEF in 2006). The campaign against human trafficking in India is a “joint Government of India/UNDOC initiative,” as the film tells us.

The language used is, of course, generic, so Preity Zinta speaks of “human dignity.” Amitabh Bachchan in his now-famous baritone declares that “no human being should be a slave ... no human person deserves this hell.” He also calls people to join him in the “global fight” against human trafficking. The Indian story is made to fit into a larger story. The language of universalism here suggests that what happens to these boys and girls, while singular to them, is *not* exceptional. The fight against trafficking, as Amitabh Bachchan tells us, is a global fight, and when we participate in a global campaign we have a trickle-down effect in India, just as, when we battle these ills in India, we contribute to the well-being of the world.

The stars’ vernacular cosmopolitanism is the *potential* of fitting the local battle into a global frame. None of the stars in *One Life, No Price* demonstrates the global nature of their actions, but their actions might be seen as fractal reiterations of a global campaign, where each dovetails into the other. It is in this portability of stories and actions that the star finds a useful technology of global citizenship.

The portability of stories is accompanied by the fungibility of victims, from the local to the global and back again. The Indian victims of human trafficking and slavery could be interchangeable with any such victim anywhere in the world, and vice versa. Bollywood Care’s recognizability lies in not only the victims’ incipient vernacular cosmopolitanism in this fungibility, but also in the generic nature, oddly, of celebrity diplomacy.⁴ A celebrity’s hyper-recognizability, I propose, effaces the cause in favor of the celebrity persona. Anti-landmine campaigns, cleft lip, cancer patients, or starvation – all local conditions and contexts of suffering – become adjuncts to the celebrity persona in a sense.

The vernacular cosmopolitan aspect of celebrity humanitarianism which generates this problematic relationship between the local and the mediated global thus seems to affirm Dambisa Moyo’s claim that aid has now become a “part of the entertainment industry” (cited in Yrjölä 2012: 359). The global entertainment industry of which, say, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan or Preity Zinta are constituents establishes, unquestionably, a set of power relations across the world. Bollywood, like Hollywood, constructs the political and cultural imaginaries of populations *around the world*. Vernacular cosmopolitanism of celebrity humanitarianism articulates – I use “articulate” in the dual sense of enunciate but also “to fit together” into a coherent

form or shape – a (global) humanitarian imaginary within, into and against the globalized cultural imaginaries of star lifestyles, fantasies and heroism. Riina Yrjölä proposes that celebrities need to be “approached as social, discursive conditions and effects that are linked closely to world politics at large” (2012: 365). I extend this line of thought to suggest that a global humanitarian imaginary of the celebrity kind is built ground upward relying on (1) the globalization of a cultural imaginary originating in, say, India (Bollywood), and (2) its articulation with the moral universals of the Red Cross, the UN or Amnesty. Vernacular cosmopolitanism is my name for this articulation where both cultural imaginaries and humanitarian concerns proceed outward from local to the global mediated through the entertainment industry and its ancillaries.

Riina Yrjölä has argued that there is now a palpable shift in liberal governance with “increasing western involvement in the internal affairs of the developing world” (2012: 366). However, vernacular cosmopolitanism of the kind I have outlined above reverses this, even though the humanitarian project of Bollywood stars is mediated by First World (Western) entertainment industries. The very value of the star here lies in a vernacular celebrity’s cosmopolitan *potential* and its *articulation* into global structures of humanitarianism. What we now perceive is the intervention of the Bollywood celebrity in the affairs of other Third World nations and within the structure of the global media-entertainment industry and the humanitarian project. Thus vernacular cosmopolitanism is a departure from the traditional model of humanitarianism that constructs the spaces of Africa or Asia as “lacks” for the Westerner to intervene in and fill up with aid and charitable acts. We are looking in fact at a whole new order of global humanitarian politics. This politics cannot at any point be disconnected from the media-entertainment complex (itself rooted in unequal economic, social and political structures of the industry around the world) that, first, produces the narrative documentation of suffering (visual, verbal, storied); second, produces the high-profile celebrity whose origins are in the same geopolitical region as the suffering; and third, enables the celebrity to articulate (with) a global humanitarian imaginary and project.

There is one more dimension to the theme, or problem, of vernacular cosmopolitanism in celebrity humanitarianism. Humanitarian action, argues Tanja Müller in a perceptive reading (via Giorgio Agamben), is based on the “conceptualization of human life as ‘bare life’” (2013: 64). Because this “bare life” “is dependent on humanitarian compassion within the humanitarian space, the parameters of political and social aspirations ultimately become determined by the benevolent giver,” writes Müller (2013: 64). Bare lives, like ghosts (Gordon 1997), are the “wastes” of any society and the result of uneven processes of development and modernity. That is, bare lives are almost always the consequence of *localized* socioeconomic processes and structures, even if these processes are themselves affected by global crises or policies. Thus, in India, farmer suicides in specific regions are the effect of the policies of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other *global* organizations that take away subsidies, increase debt and force the farmers to take to genetically modified (GM) seeds and foods. These farmers are the bare lives of the region. We could make the same arguments about the famine victims of Somalia, the rape victims of Rwanda

or the displaced of Sudan. These same bare lives, when they attract the attention of any humanitarian effort, cease to be bare lives and acquire political value. Humanitarianism makes them, Müller notes, “beneficiaries of charity rather than subjects under the law” (2013: 64). It is local law and local socioeconomic conditions that produce bare lives: humanitarianism takes them out of these conditions, in a sense, and globalizes them as subjects of global humanitarian regimes that see them only as biological bodies (bare lives) and ignores the local conditions that created them in the first instance. Müller’s point is remarkably similar to Craig Calhoun’s suggestion (2008) that the modern age is marked by the condition of imagining human beings in the abstract, in their bare humanity. There is an insistence on equivalence (shared vulnerability, potential for suffering) rather than on differences of ethnicity or color. Such an “abstraction,” while detrimental to effecting real changes in socioeconomic policies on the ground, enables the global humanitarian regime to “pluck” the victim and translate him into a global icon: the embodiment of suffering itself, minus ethnic, racial and local markers. (I will have reason to return to the question of icons later in the essay.)

Humanitarian regimes acknowledge the suffering of such bare lives but only to shift the focus on to the globalized (figure of the) “giver.” A certain anonymity of the victim – except as Victim – remains even as the spotlight is on the celebrity carer. I propose that under such conditions celebrity humanitarianism (1) implicitly celebrates the global reach of the “giver” by universalizing “bare lives,” while (2) simultaneously ignoring the conditions that produce bare lives, and (3) effacing the global structures that construct and empower the celebrity. Thus, the project of celebrity humanitarianism addresses the bare life delinked from its *localized* structural inequalities of bare lives, just as it ignores the (unequal) globalization processes that have *produced* both bare lives *and* the global celebrity. That is, I am calling attention to the ambivalence at the heart of celebrity humanitarianism. The globalized structures that produce bare lives at very local levels in Africa or Asia also, subsequently, pluck the local celebrity, globalize him and insert him into a global humanitarian project. When we think of humanitarianism’s focus on bare lives, as Müller proposes, we ignore the alignment of the structures that produce both bare lives and the “givers” setting out to alleviate the miseries across the troubled geography of the world. Celebrity care will *not* address local policy and economic conditions that produce the bare lives, just as it will *not* take cognizance of the structures that produce and posit them – celebrities – as *givers*: processes such as globalization that are themselves partially responsible for producing the bare lives or depictions of these bare lives on global screens.

Vernacular cosmopolitanism of the celebrity care variety, by offering minimal therapeutic and palliative care, runs the risk of ignoring real material conditions of inequality and injustice in favor of a *simulation* of a humanitarian geography of the world. Michael Marks and Zachary Fischer do have a point when they write: “entertainment celebrities who have adopted political roles, rather than challenging the prevailing political order, have re-legitimated it” (2002: 384). Further, they write, “the civic body represented by participatory democracy may be replaced by the corporal body of the celebrity activist” (2002: 385). The instant media spotlight – necessarily

cosmopolitan and global – on celebrity acts of charity, compassion and care shifts the focus away from local material conditions of gross injustice and exploitation. As Julie Wilson (2011) has argued in the case of Audrey Hepburn, arguably the contemporary world's first major celebrity diplomat, while her femininity helped redirect the star power in particular ways, her own stardom acquired a certain cosmopolitan touch. Such a cosmopolitanization, driven as much by the “pastoral power” (Wilson 2011) as by the media focus on the celebrity body, runs the risk of evading the material issues of vernacular (bare) lives in favor of a simulated universalization of celebrity work and ameliorative care. The fact that states are rarely under any compulsion to take note of or address celebrity diplomacy and actions suggests that the real work of participatory and grassroots activism lies elsewhere and not in the realm of Bollywood care. Bollywood care seems more to do with potential than results, in other words.

Antiquity, Antecedents, Authenticity

The first discursive move made by the Bollywood-celebrity-as-vernacular-cosmopolitan in the process of self-fashioning is to generate a narrative of antiquity. This antiquarian discourse and construction of a local genealogy is an integral component of celebrity diplomacy and charity work.

After Aishwarya Rai Bachchan was appointed UNAIDS goodwill ambassador her first official statement was cast in the language of antiquarian discourse: “I am honoured to accept this appointment. Spreading awareness on health issues, especially related to women and children, has *always* been a priority for me” (UNAIDS 2012, emphasis added). The same UN press release draws attention to the antiquity of her work: “Mrs Rai Bachchan has been involved in humanitarian issues for many years ...”

The discourse of “I have always been ...” suggests a *naturalization* of the role of celebrity diplomat and brand ambassador, a logical outcome of a set of “natural” predilections, attitudes and competencies.

For the Bollywood star to claim antiquity and antecedents to her or his work is to add a further dimension to the theater of care. (Abhay Deol, recently a campaigner for animal rights with Animal Planet, makes one shift: he claims “*we* are known to be traditionally and culturally inclined to conservation” (“Tiger Talk,” emphasis added), thus suggesting that an entire culture has *always* been given over to conservation. It makes the glamour and the lifestyle secondary to the “natural” features, or “essences” of the individual. That is, antiquarian discourse relegates the glamour and the sex appeal to second place, almost as though these are incidental to the “making” of the star and what is crucial, or integral, to the star is the love they have *always* had for children or their fears about cleft lips or landmines. In a sense, antiquarian discourse appears to reveal the “private” individual, and depict, implicitly, her celebrityhood as the public face. If, as Richard Dyer and later Chris Rojek have argued, our fascination with celebrity lives is primarily about their private selves (Dyer 1986; Rojek 2001), then antiquarian discourse in celebrity diplomacy offers us glimpses,

supposedly, into the “true” individual behind the persona. (That this true self is itself a persona constructed *within* a context of crisis, development diplomacy and suffering is something we of course miss.)

The beautiful, highly paid, popular Bollywood star also humanizes herself through the antiquarian discourse because of a process Jackie Stacey has termed “extra-cinematic identificatory practices.” Stacey’s argument is of course directed at the spectator’s transformation driven by the need to be more like the admired star. Stacey writes: “This transformation does not only take place at the level of fantasy, but also involves activities in which the star becomes part of discourses of the spectator’s identity outside the cinema” (1993: 159). I propose that with antiquarian discourses the star inserts herself into the everyday life of the “ordinary person.” The love of dogs, the adoration of children, or the anxiety over a facial anomaly expressed by the stars is an instantiation of role-playing where the star puts herself in the place of the spectator, mimicking our ordinary lives. The star has become a part of the discourses of our lives, outside the fantasy world of the film.

The simultaneity of the antiquarian and extra-cinematic identificatory practices results in an “ethicalization of persona” (Chouliaraki 2013: 92). This ethicalization draws upon a moral universalism – all people love children, most people love animals, all of us are afraid of being maimed – that remains unnamed but implicit. The ethicalization of persona is an appeal to these universal categories that then involves a performance of the emotion of the sufferer.

But in case we leave with the impression that all this ethicalization is mere role-play, the star’s “roles of charity-giver and humanitarian are not just presented as separate or add-on roles, but as profoundly interwoven with the roles of mother, carer, actress and celebrity, as imbricated into the story of her life,” as Jo Littler says of Angelina Jolie’s humanitarian work (2008: 238). Personal belief, personal experiences and public cause come together to produce the Bollywood care discourse, as we can see in Aishwarya Rai Bachchan’s statements about her role as goodwill ambassador for UNAIDS:

as a new mother, I can personally relate to this – the joys and concerns of every mother and the hopes that we have for our children. I strongly believe that every baby should be born free from HIV. And I wish that every woman living with HIV stays healthy and has access to treatment. I promise that with UNAIDS, I will do my utmost to make this happen. (UNAIDS 2012)

Preity Zinta, speaking after accepting an honorary doctorate from the University of East London for her contribution to the arts and her humanitarian work (as the Vice Chancellor put it), comes first to her own childhood, when her father urged her to grow up into an independent woman and her parents gave her the opportunities to be one. Using this as a backdrop, Zinta goes on to plead with the women in the audience to empower themselves through education. And finally, she calls attention to the opportunities given her by the Loomba Foundation (the charity organization Zinta works with, focusing on widows and girl children) to help women in India (Zinta 2010).

In the case of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, it appears as though it is her recognition of the vulnerability of her own child and her role as mother that leads, naturally, to her humanitarian work. In the case of Zinta, her role as humanitarian work for destitute and helpless women/girls carries into practice her parents' advice. In both cases, the sincerity of the star is established through the imbrication of the antiquarian and the "authenticating device" of returning to one's personal life. It is from this personal experience that the larger project of saving the world arises. As Mark Wheeler puts it: "celebrities command credibility through a conjunction of deinstitutionalisation, personalisation and parasocial familiarity to transcend other forms of social authority" (2011: 10).

The (re)turn to personal stories, whether of trauma or privilege in all these star cases offers a slice of personal information, usually dramatic and emotionally loaded, in order to suggest both the "natural" wellspring of their charity work and to authenticate this work. Motherhood, childhood, education and the professional success that all celebs speak of (even as they speak of their charity work) positions them interestingly as ordinary individuals but also *successful* individuals within a system. If, to turn to Jo Littler once again,

[The] *performance* of celebrity soul, or the performance of the internalisation of social anguish, becomes a necessary part of contemporary celebrity, acting as an attempt to *gesturally* redress the insecurities of the system it is part of ... Such a performance can be enacted, as here, in terms of *fortune* and pity rather than acting to confront a system of wealth and power they are part of. (2008: 248, emphasis in original)

The "hyperindividualism" (Littler 2008: 248) of the celebrity extends their individual agency to respond morally to suffering since addressing the inequities of the system is beyond them – since the system is what affords them the privileges of being hyper-individualist in the first instance.

I am further proposing, via David Jefferess, who speaks of benevolence as the "signature" of modernity, that benevolence and charity become signatures of what I think of as a "celebrity modernity," a modernity characterized by mediated spectacularization, the clever regimentation of private/public (where privacy rights and publicness clash on occasion), extensive culture talk, hyperindividualism and, now, charity work. Celebrity modernity necessitates using one's hyperindividualism for the aid of the unfortunate Other. Charity work and activism are technologies of citizenship in this modernity. Proceeding from a highly personal experience and extending into personalized care, celebrity modernity's benevolence is an essential method of self-fashioning. Reconstituting the world minimally through one's *own* emotional response and ethical responsibility in recognizing the less fortunate Other in such a modernity is never about tackling the historical (transnational) foundations for the misfortunes of the Other, the glaring social inequalities or the failure of the nation-state.

The entire apparatus of authentication and antiquarianism that I have discussed in this section is central to the self-fashioning of the "benevolent celebrity" in the age of iniquity and inequality which addresses a personal history but ignores a larger one. It

appears as though celebrity modernity's care and compassion can thrive only within an absence of history and an excess of individual effort. This celebrity modernity is also the space of a curious form of cosmopolitanism, to which I shall now turn.

Local Star, Global Stage

The Bollywood star emphasizes local roots, local work, local fan following, and local practices, often, as noted above, going back in *time*, even as she moves outward into the territory ahead of global humanitarian projects. Lilie Chouliaraki (2013) argues that celebrity activism is built on an “aspirational performance of solidarity” when the offstage persona is conflated with onstage performance. This is clearly evidenced in the UN video of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's speech as UNAIDS ambassador or the star-driven UN documentary of 2007 against human trafficking, *One Life, No Price*.

Priyanka Chopra, goodwill ambassador for UNICEF and now campaigner for the UN's Girl Up says this about her role:

I come from a country where girls are not treated fairly – many girls are kept out of school, get married at a young age, and don't have access to health services ... I am joining Girl Up because I firmly believe in the campaign's mission, that every girl, no matter where she is born, should grow up safe, healthy and empowered. Every girl should have the opportunity to reach her full potential. (Girl Up 2015)

Celina Jaitly, now UN “equality champion” for its Free and Equal project for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights, began an interview in the Cinema Plus section of *The Hindu* (Hyderabad, August 25, 2013) by citing the instance of a gay Delhi professor harassed till he committed suicide, and then went on to cite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As with Zinta, Shah Rukh Khan's honorary doctorate, from the University of Bedfordshire in the UK in 2009, came from a nomination filed by a nongovernmental organization, Routes 2 Roots (founded by Rakesh Gupta), that focuses on cultural activities in the South Asia region, for his work in the education sector in the state of Rajasthan. Khan's work is local, like Zinta's – in the Indian government's Pulse Polio and AIDS campaigns, in addition to performing for numerous disaster relief and other campaigns. That Khan is an internationally visible star – unusually for a non-English celebrity, he inaugurated an English historical tourist space, the eleventh-century Warwick Castle, in 2007 – is traceable to his cinematic saleability. The shift from films to activism he makes in India amplifies his stardom in entirely different domains, such as global humanitarian work (most recently as global ambassador for the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council).

I propose that for Bollywood stars this means merging their offstage *local* (Indian) persona and an onstage *global* one. This is evidenced by the fact that the Bollywood celebs, when appointed to global ambassadorial positions, invariably speak of their work on the ground in *India*, which ostensibly prepares them for a global stage. It can also be suggested that the global role played by a local star inserts them into

the transnational discourse of benevolence. Their work *in India* gets a global validation – in the form of UN ambassadorships – and a presence, therefore, on a global stage. This at once separates them from the Bollywood “base” by relocating them, literally and figuratively, on to the global media’s celebrity circuit *and* foregrounds their origins. They enter, in other words, the hallowed portals of international celebrity-hood through their acts of benevolence at local levels.

The local star’s acts on the ground are embodied manifestations of a discourse of care and compassion that is already global, and hence is *not* unique to India, or the star concerned. Shah Rukh Khan’s engaged, for example, with *Cosmopolitan* magazine’s Real Men Don’t Hit Women, and Men against Rape and Discrimination (acronym: MARD, where “mard” in Hindi stands for “male” but, in colloquial usage, connotes masculinity, even machismo). Coming in the wake of the gang rape of a student on a bus in New Delhi in December 2012 – which, it must be noted, attracted attention and activism from all over the world, including Harvard – the campaigns fit into the larger global concerns of gendered violence. Thus the star moves seamlessly across sociopolitical concerns even while working at local levels. Benevolence as an already existing discourse becomes a frame for the interpretation of the star’s actions. Conversely, the star, speaking the language of, say, the UN against slavery or trafficking, is able to suit their local action to the global word, even though – and this is important – by the very fact of their being celebrities in the local context, they are distanced from the people and events they set out to improve or alter. The vernacular cosmopolitan that/who is the local star on the global stage will forever be caught within a troubling Manicheanism. This is the irreparable *distance* from local context as a Bollywood *star* and yet a proximity, as a *local*, to local disaster/people/conditions. The Bollywood star is a racially and culturally *distant* individual in the galaxy of Hollywood personalities, and yet is *proximate* with all of them by virtue of both class privilege/identity and local actions.

Further, their actions fit in with a larger cosmopolitan project, represented in and by transnational organizations from Amnesty to the UN. This larger cosmopolitan project, founded at least partially on, or in resonance with, a philosophical approach – the obligation of the affluent to the less privileged – redefines the local-global connection in quite interesting ways. First, the discourse of benevolence or charity into which the Bollywood star’s actions fit has a colonial history. This is a history whose relevance to India, or any South Asian nation, is now almost a truism. To think of, for example, the social reform measures of the Clapham Sect or Rudyard Kipling’s (in)famous articulation of the “white man’s burden” in India – concomitant with similar humanitarian projects that encircled the globe (Lester 2000) from the early nineteenth century – is to think of the problematic imperial origins of present-day cosmopolitan benevolence with its very real material effects. That is, Bollywood care’s insertion into a global discourse of benevolence *effaces the historical construction of benevolence*, the historical roots of inequality and the historical structuring of (racialized) binaries.⁵ If, as Ruth Frankenberg points out (1993), benevolence was a set of cultural practices wherein whiteness was unmarked, then contemporary global discourses of benevolence in which the Bollywood star participates are a set of cultural practices that strive to erase a

racialized history by demonstrating how the “Third World” star has arrived on a global stage despite (because of?) his origins. That is, cosmopolitan benevolence is a project that effaces the racial and national identity of the star and the problematic history of his own country, a history of inequalities that is messily the product of global/European colonialism in the past. It becomes a mode of establishing a post-racial, even posthistorical discourse of feigned equality, embodied of course in the privileged *body* of the Bollywood celebrity. Let me turn briefly to this corporeality.

I have already made the point that the Bollywood global celebrity does not address local material *conditions* of policy that produce the “bare lives” they *then* set out to save, and nor do they draw attention to the structures of globalization that enable them, themselves, to achieve global stardom. In what might be read as an allegory of screen culture itself, munificence on screen invisibilizes the efforts – and wrongs – behind the glitter. The local is effaced and simultaneously retained when the Bollywood star travels west. The face and body of the Bollywood star suggests an “incorporeal materialism” (Massumi 2002). We perceive the Bollywood body in the form of a *movement*, or *portability*, from East to West – if we retain an older binary reflective of a history of migration in the twentieth century – and in its recall of local corporeality (“I have always ...”). Bodies in movement, Massumi proposes, are corporeal but seem to have an incorporeal dimension to them: *of* the body but not *it*. Given their insertion into both a ghostly, invisible colonial history of benevolence and global media assemblages, this incorporeal materialism seems a major constituent of BBC’s faces and bodies. The Bollywood global celebrity is at once corporeal – it is the face that sells, after all – and yet is inscribed, by the very nature of the task, into movement and therefore incorporeality. It is her body that launches the campaign, product or manifesto across the world, and yet it is in this very order of movement, from local contexts to global and its different localities (Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in Africa, Jolie in the Philippines), that this body’s *local histories have been invisibilized*. I think of the star’s incorporeal materialism as symbolic of the invisible flows and structures of globalized/ing charity itself. If there is now a palpable Bollywood-inspired culture “effect” (Mishra 2002) writ across the world, then this effect demands an incorporeal materialism. Gavin Fridell and Martijn Konings claim that we can see these activists as other than just pop stars or celebrities and more as “icons”; for them such activists are “embodiments of the tremendous potential and promise held out by Western capitalism” (2013: 4).⁶ “Embodiments,” of course, they are, but as I have proposed, it is as incorporeal materialism, bodies in movement, transformation, relocation and transcoding into multiple media formats and across platforms – this last, literally, for the characteristic of the celebrity is to move from a “native” domain of expertise into any other – that they function as icons.

Another kind of incorporeal materialism is also manifest in global celebrity culture that spills over into the humanitarian project. Shilpa Shetty, Bollywood actress, was conferred the UK’s Silver Star Award for her contribution to international humanitarian causes, especially HIV/AIDS activism, in June 2007. The timing of the award was particularly significant. A few months prior to the award, Shetty was a participant in the UK’s *Celebrity Big Brother* TV program. The participation had already amplified her global, or at least British, celebritydom as a result of racial

bullying at the hands of fellow-participant Jade Goody. The abuse once again foregrounded the irreducible corporeality of the (Asian) body. Despite the clear movement from East to West within the (classed) domain of celebrity culture that in a sense deploys skin color as exotic *appeal*, the incident on the one hand ostensibly established solidarity across races in the age of globalizing celeb-culture and on the other pointed to the unchanged, or perhaps even hardened, racial formations in the age of mass media. The award drew attention to Shetty as an ambassador whose skin color and racial identity did not matter in the larger cause of humanitarianism. Yet its timing, immediately after the abuse charges and notoriety, seems to signal an attempt both to overcompensate for the highlighted racial identity and to ignore it. The Möbius strip of Shetty's celebrityhood constantly twisted pan-racial, global humanitarianism around her racial identity, embodied as corporeality, in the incident. Corporeality does, and doesn't, matter.

This aspect, of course, is not to downplay the efforts made by the Bollywood star. My aim is, rather, to locate the significance of the role assayed by the star, a role whose very contemporaneity – saleable face/body, contemporary agendas of the UN, recent actions and activism – proposes a simultaneous rootedness and a certain ethereal detachment, even *erasure*. The global stage on which the *postcolonial* Bollywood star performs becomes, to phrase it perhaps a bit too caustically, a performance that masks the history of colonization and concomitant humanitarianism in the very country from which the star emerges. The postcolonial star partially erases colonial histories, creates a supposedly more empowered contemporary Indian history, while invisibilizing the neocolonial, global-imperial flows and structures (including Western funding) that enable the performance of this erasure-hypervisibility move.

Global citizenships of benevolence that were once associated with white races now position the Bollywood star, based on their work on the ground, as a contributor to global actions. Such a global citizenship of benevolence also ignores the impact of varied global actions on the very ground where the star's actions are documented. Thus, the *historical* role of transnational organizations such as the WTO or the International Monetary Fund, or companies like Dow Chemicals or, formerly, Enron, and their actions *on the ground* in India – whether the Bhopal gas tragedy that claimed thousands of lives in 1984 or the disappearing subsidies of farmers due to WTO policies or GM seeds from Monsanto – get erased in the all-new history being written, in which the Bollywood star plays a part. Larger local contexts of global interventions disappear in favor of select sites of high-emotion, glamorized intervention by the celebrity. To return once more to Fridell and Konings, “*superhuman* feats are performed with only *modest, pragmatic* outcomes” (2013: 4, emphasis in original).

My argument is that the local star gets on to the global stage through a process of erasure of history, an overriding emphasis on the contemporary and a careful splicing together of local acts of benevolence with a global discourse of humanitarianism, plus of course a certain incorporeal materialism generated as a result of movement and relocation. This is a postracial scenario – I use the theatrical-cinematic term consciously – staged for public consumption thriving on star power, appropriating an already existing discourse and history of benevolence and erasing an-Other history of this same racialized benevolence.⁷

There is one further point to be made. The Bollywood star situated within this global discourse, working with and beside the victims and suffering Other in Africa, pleading for an end to slavery in other parts of the world, or campaigning for better treatment of animals, establishes an affective affinity across races and cultures, even when the work is restricted to a particular locality or region. The visuals of stars with maimed or sick children in interior Congo is an “embeddedness” in local trauma but exhibit universal concerns. Michael Goodman and Christine Barnes argue in their essay on “development celebrities” that “authenticity becomes embodied in development celebrities through the processes of ‘bearing witness’ to crises and underdevelopment that they do for us as the audience, potential carer and potential consumer/donor” (2011: 80).⁸ What I am referring to as the embeddedness that exhibits universal concerns is a performance which includes “their reflexive approach and their self-reflexive use of ‘I’; without it the confessional doesn’t work, we don’t see or hear about them being touched, made sad/overjoyed or describe how it is they, and of course, we should feel” (Goodman and Barnes 2011: 80).

Smile Train’s video clip of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, its ambassador, performs authenticity and embeddedness in a different fashion (Smile Train 2015). Aishwarya, as she starts to speak to us about cleft lip, suddenly begins to develop a cleft lip on screen. Since her speech afterward would be unclear, we are given subtitles. When the speech ends (it is a 40-second video), she has pleaded for corrective surgery just as the cleft lip on her face begins to be repaired and she can speak normally again. We are not shown the star’s work with cleft-palate children: she *becomes* the cleft-palate individual herself on screen. This is the “aspirational performance of solidarity” that Chouliaraki says is at the heart of humanitarian work, when the morphing transforms “the most beautiful woman in the world” into a victim. The video calls upon us to see one of the world’s most beautiful women with this facial anomaly, thereby rendering her the very opposite of the fantasy she represents: she *could have been this way*.

Bollywood Care is a brand that therefore benefits by fitting into a wholly new media regime – global humanitarian projects – and cementing its position within the celebrity discourse of the global entertainment industry. Just as bare lives in interior Congo or Vidharbha become global icons of suffering – the subjects of global humanitarian regimes – Bollywood care offers a global citizenship for its celebrities. However, we need to see this citizenship as an assemblage that necessarily originates in the local, in their pasts within a developing nation with its colonial histories of benevolent and other interventions, before moving on to the world stage, albeit with the Manicheism I have identified above. Without a vernacular “connection” and the flows – finance, people, profits, audiences – of the global Bollywood industry, its stars would not become global brands, or brand ambassadors.

Notes

- 1 For some skepticism about how exactly Bollywood has gone global see Derek Bose (2006), especially chapter 10.

- 2 See <http://www.thefoundation.in/rahul-bose.html> (accessed May 2015).
- 3 Here we perceive the politics of the popular where particular relations structure the field of cultural practices and classify cultural forms into “dominant” and “subordinate.” Hindi cinema’s dominance has been the subject of considerable attention and critical work. In a recent essay film reviewer and journalist Bharadwaj Rangan puts it plainly, “the implications of institutionalizing Hindi cinema as Indian cinema ... are disturbing,” and points to the ‘symbiotic relationship [Bollywood has forged] with the English-speaking media’ (2013).
- 4 On celebrity diplomacy see, among others Cooper (2008) and Wheeler (2011).
- 5 For a quick survey of the universalizing discourse of colonial benevolence and paternalism in British India see Fischer-Tiné and Mann (2004).
- 6 Dan Brockington, likewise, points to the closing gap between conservation and corporate capitalism in celebrity conservation campaigns (2009).
- 7 Marta Bolognani, writing about cricketer Shoaib Akhtar, argues that he uses the “constraints of post-colonial fragmentation as a *resource* for his celebrity; his different personas have privileged different audiences, challenging the Jungian archetype of celebrity as transcultural and ahistorical” (2011: 33). In a similar fashion, Bollywood stars appropriate their experience – experience at least in terms of the visual evidence of poverty and suffering in India – as a resource for their global celebrity role.
- 8 Authenticity has also to do with questions of expertise. Examining the downside of celebrity diplomacy, Heribert Dieter and Rajiv Kumar summarize the problem of celebrity competence to make pronouncements on complicated issues: “The world is painted in black and white and good is pitted against evil. Nuance is inevitably lost. Historic experience is disregarded. Celebrities provide their followers with easily understood, morally couched messages, but the process of development is much more complex” (2008: 260).

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Part Five

Celebrity Screens/Technologies of Celebrity

Introduction

P. David Marshall

Historically, the study of technology in media and communication studies has often revolved around the degree to which the technology is a determining or major causal factor in the shape of a culture. For instance, Marshall McLuhan, the media theorist who was championed in the 1990s by *Wired* magazine as its patron saint, has often been labeled negatively as a “technological determinist.” McLuhan’s famous aphorism, “the medium is the message” (1964: 8) entreats us to see that the content of any medium is derived from a previous medium and in our focus on content we miss the effect of the medium itself. Over time, this approach to technology has gained in sophistication. A number of scholars linked to this tradition have developed what they describe as a “media ecology” approach which implies an interaction between the social uses of media and the environment that media constructs for a particular culture (Gronbeck 2007). Similarly, the emerging research on mediatization privileges the effects of media technology, but through the exploration of these effects identifies how a particular technology is deployed and used within a culture and thereby operates as a form of social construction of reality (see Lundby 2014; Couldry and Hepp 2013).

Perhaps with less sophistication, past research in celebrity and stardom has also differentiated the technological origins of particular personalities. My own work from 1997, aligned to some degree with Ellis’s writing (Ellis 1982), sets up the deterministic distinction that film produced an aura-filled public persona of distance and allure, while television cultivated a form of familiar persona, and popular music constructed personas that played in the realm of authenticity (Marshall 2014). These characterizations were not simply related to the technology, but rather the wider institutions of each cultural form; in other words, there was an element of the industrial construction of these forms of celebrity as individuals were converted into sellable and commodity form that played in different ways to how audiences received them and used them. The differentiation also related to how each technology

privileged a different form of identity. For example, film produced fictional identities with regularity, but also promoted their film stars to promote and represent and embody those films in the wider culture. Its form of exhibition created a distance from the audience that was just not identifiable in the television persona who, at least para-socially, inhabited our living rooms and often spoke to us directly as presenters and hosts.

Part Five explores this relationship of technology to the constitution of celebrity in contemporary culture. In so doing, it both builds on and dismantles these deterministic readings of how different screens produced different public identities. Both Alice Marwick's and Misha Kavka's chapters work through how the new screens of online and mobile media culture have constituted a different shaping of celebrity. In other words, what has been described as new media culture shifts the presentation of the public self and allows for different movements of the most celebrated through our culture. As Kavka's research points out, the very idea of the singularity of television's identity makes the idea of the singular personality produced by television difficult to discern. Celebrities migrate between different forms of electronic exhibition with greater regularity and with remarkable blending of text, image, sound, and moving image and even greater communicative variety in the intersection with their audience of users, fans, and classical audience members.

Nonetheless, "screens" do shape something around the production of celebrity. Historically, one can see that film performance was at least partially mediated by the technology of presentation. In the 1920s and 1930s, the look of the film performer and their reconstruction into a luminescent star was dependent on a careful configuration of makeup, lighting, costume, lenses and – at least for some such as Marlene Dietrich – cosmetic surgery. They were different than the over-the-top acting gestures, powder-cake and cosmetic performance presentations that would have been privileged and necessary in theatrical stagecraft and technique. These filmic constructions became representations of beauty and style that were emulated by a wider population searching for ways to appropriate the affective effect of these artificial yet living beings. In a much more mundane way, television similarly demanded a transformation of the self into a televisual self through appropriate makeup, lighting and even studio set construction for the "liveness" of much televisual performance. In an iconic case, presidential hopeful Richard Nixon's refusal to apply makeup for his 1960 televised debate made him look unshaven, sweaty and less trustworthy than the televisually prepared – and tanned – Kennedy (Barnouw 1990: 272–4). Some of these constructions of the screen persona were in response to the limitations and exigencies of the technology of exhibition; other elements were developed into habituated techniques of construction of a public personality by the entertainment industries themselves as they honed their crafting of how the celebrated should appear on screens, in magazine portraits and on stage.

If one begins integrating other screens in the production and projection of celebrity, the coherence of the argument that the technology shapes the construction of the public individual begins to break down. As is evident in understanding both film and television production of celebrity, it might be more accurate to talk about screen practices that have emerged in the managing of public identity formation.

Screen practices then may be privileged techniques that are related to the technology, but also what can now be described as the software, “affordances” as Marwick emphasizes in her chapter, and applications that surround the movement of media and information about celebrities and are enacted by the user. What emerges from these screen practices is a techno-aesthetic patterning of public persona, one that is partially related to these technologies, partially related to the software architecture of something like a social media site, and partially related to generic patterning of identity portrayal. What has to be understood is that these formations of public personalities are also informed by the most prominent and historically rich cultural forms around the presentation of the self. Thus, Barry King’s quite remarkable chapter in this book details how the movement of the highly structured, highly edited, but also highly professional performance of a public self as characters/public selves by actors in theater and film provides one of the richest tapestries for understanding the very taxonomy and political economy that structures and moderates the fabrication of the personas of celebrities and public personalities in an even wider context.

The screens that convey and portray our pantheon of celebrities are by their very nature technologies that simultaneously brings us in closer (virtual) proximity to these entities and underline their nonphysical presence. As fan/celebrity research has articulated, our various technologies allow us to construct “para-social” relations (Horton and Wohl 1956) with the famed. And in an interesting retrograde rethink, contemporary technology permits an understanding through the concept of avatar that our past and present relations to these close-but-distant beings is a connection to a constructed and fabricated formation of identity designed for some public form of connection. The screens of celebrity, whether from the past or present, produce these avatars that are simultaneously real and artifice. The different screen and performance practices, as can be seen in the analytical work of the authors of this part’s chapters, identify different constitutions and relations between some appeal to the authentic and some appeal to the artifice of self-presentation.

Misha Kavka’s chapter entitled “Clevision: mobilizations of the television screen” deftly describes the migration of both celebrity and screen culture. Her useful new term “clevision,” which she defines as “the everyday circulation of celebrity through the extensions of television culture as supported by the spread of screen technologies,” accurately describes the new mobility of celebrity twinned with the industrial efforts of the new mobility of television. She augments this meaning with considerable more force by claiming that television has expanded its reach through and via celebrity to these other screen practices and cultures, which resonates with the contribution that Nick Couldry makes in Part Two about how celebrity is a form of scaffolding between media industries. Kavka’s work identifies three movements of celebrity derived from the intersections of new screens and the agile work of a transformed television industry. Through second screen use, the televisual construction of mobile celebrity through reality television, and through the now porous constitution of celebrity value between media forms, Kavka is able to identify the “centripetal” and the “centrifugal” activities of a television industry now comfortable with pulling in and producing celebrities as well as circulating celebrities that are

emerging and developing through other structures, whether that be in the aesthetic of film or the flows of online culture.

Barry King's contribution, "Stardom, celebrity, and the moral economy of pretending," provides a longer historical arc in his investigations of performance and its particular and varied constitutions of a public persona. His work is valuable in providing a matrix of delineations and definitions of performed identity that are useful beyond film and theater performance precisely because they differentiate between the fictive and the real, the serialized and the momentary. His characterization of the "fetishistic" quality in the production of a celebrity and what he calls the "totemic" quality of stardom are groundbreaking in their utility in understanding the posturing of the public self and the dimension of persona. Augmenting this analysis is his extension into the play of technology in the production of these performing selves. The technology of film, for instance, shifts an element of control – and an element of labor – from the individual into the production/institutional process. Thus the film performer/performance and its representation are collectively produced but provide an image of uniqueness that is the convertible value for the performer. King's analysis then extends further to seeing how the "work" and "labor" of producing a distinctive self that operates so obviously in the entertainment industries with actors becoming celebrities by fetishizing themselves is also at play in online culture: for King this is a "moral economy of pretending" and is defined by clashes of interests, rights, labor, consumers, and producers that become the contested loci of the production of contemporary persona.

The concluding chapter of this part by Alice Marwick accurately differentiates the distinct kind of celebrity that is emerging in the contemporary moment via technology. Entitled "'You may know me from YouTube': (Micro-)celebrity in social media," Marwick defines with greater acuity what is the micro-celebrity. She separates micro-celebrity from related terms such as subcultural celebrity, but provides something of a link to how Driessens has developed the concept of celebrification and celebritization from mediatization (2013). In particular, the new movements of celebrity that Marwick describes as emerging in online culture identify a contested democratization of fame as a practice. Micro-celebrity is dependent on a new generation of mediatization that extends the practices of presenting the self and developing a connected audience via different forms of social media. Through an analysis of a Tumblr micro-celebrity, Mollysoda, and a YouTube entity, Miranda Sings, Marwick isolates on the technological affordances and the cultural dynamics that are at play in the construction of recognizable personalities. Micro-celebrity is part of a wider "attention economy" that describes a new laboring in the production of the self as it permits and fosters a new micro-celebrity culture of para-social connection.

Each of the chapters in this part explores this complex relationship among technology, screens, and celebritized identity. In combination, the works presented here chart with an array of useful new terms the emerging complexity, mobility, and appropriation of the public self.

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Television

Mobilizations of the Television Screen

Misha Kavka

More than half a century after its domestic entrenchment in households and its industrial consolidation into an oligarchy of broadcast corporations, television is once again in a highly mobile state. Under threat from the expansion of new media, its “death” warily predicted since the early 2000s by commentators and scholars alike, television’s future is under debate. At the same time, celebrity culture is undergoing exponential expansion, with notable help from television, if we go by the awards shows whose function it is to celebrate TV by celebrating its celebrities. Trumpeting the health of television at the 58th Primetime Emmy Awards in 2006, host Conan O’Brien reassured his audience that “TV is bigger than ever right now. Even movie stars have their own TV shows these days,” before listing Alec Baldwin on NBC, James Woods on CBS, and Mel Gibson putatively with a new show on Al Jazeera (O’Brien 2006). Aside from O’Brien’s dig at Gibson’s anti-Semitism (surely a greater offense to Al Jazeera than to Gibson), the joke is meant to deliver an assurance that the network era of television is alive and well precisely *because* celebrities are flocking to it, even if there is a degree of nervous protestation to O’Brien’s cavalier attitude. Just seven years later – after a low period when a resigned Julia Louis-Dreyfus welcomed the audience at the 2009 Emmy Awards to “the last official year of network broadcast television” (Wyatt 2009) – the host of the 2013 Emmy Awards, Neil Patrick Harris, seemed to have come to terms with radical changes to the television industry, helpfully defining television “for our younger audience” as “the thing you watch on your phones” before deadpanning that viewing has never been easier: “You can now watch TV on your TV, on your laptop, on your mobile device, on your combined watch; you can put on the Google Glass ... in fact, right now I’m actually watching an episode of *American Horror Story: Asylum* on my contact lenses” (Harris 2013). Cue terrified outcry, demonstrating the immersive effectivity of TV on any platform.

Compared to O’Brien in 2006, not only does Harris exhibit no anxiety about name-checking a show that appears as original content on a cable channel (FX),

but his extensive list of screening options makes an implicit case for the endurance of television beyond traditional networks and screen technologies – provided that we are able to separate the product from the box in which it used to be delivered. While the overt message is about joining those you can't beat, the self-congratulatory back-patting of the awards show sends another, more subliminal message about the continuity and spread of celebrity. The traditional networks and the TV set may be dispensable, but celebrity culture seems to be proliferating along with television's proliferating screens. Indeed, with Hollywood A-lister Kevin Spacey receiving a nomination for Lead Actor in a Drama Series at the 2013 Emmys for *House of Cards*, a program produced by the streaming service Netflix, it may be that simply being a "movie star" in the film medium is now an insufficient screening platform for celebrity status.

Although recent transformations to the television screen – in its size, sites and content – have been as confidently predicted as they have been carefully monitored (see Turner and Tay 2009), associated transformations to television celebrity have crept up on us largely unforeseen. It is not uncommon for critics and practitioners to adhere to the hierarchical distinction established by John Ellis in the early 1980s between film "stars" and TV "personalities" (1982), as though the technology of producing celebrity on the "small screen" has not changed in tandem with the technological developments of the screens that serve as the celebrity interface. On the one hand, to paraphrase Norma Desmond, celebrity has become too "big" in the intervening decades since Ellis's distinction to be contained by any one screen; on the other hand, the interplay of media-specific screens is more important than ever in shaping the representation, valuation and reach of celebrity. This is not, however, just a question of television's technological extension across a number of screens. Rather, as television transmission technology diversifies over a range of delivery platforms, multiple media deliverables are also converging on the TV screen, suggesting a greater range of uses for television than the provision of traditional news and entertainment genres. These developments in turn are having an impact on the way that celebrity is displayed, produced and distributed by and through the televisual medium. Although I will not here address the question of what television "is" or, as Turner and Tay put it, "how is this still television?" (2009: 2), I do intend to argue that the transformations of the television screen and changes to celebrity culture are mutually dependent, demanding that they be investigated in relation to one another. This will involve asking how television's textual, social and industrial patterns of producing and maintaining celebrity have aligned with changing screen technologies to reconfigure the erstwhile TV "personality" into a screen star, in a much different sense than what the term meant two decades ago.

To address this question, I will focus on the *mobility* of contemporary celebrity in relation to screen technology. Mobility is a useful term because it captures a sense of transformation at the same time as it denotes literal, technological and sociological movement. For my purposes, mobility is to be understood in a number of specific ways: as technological mobility across forms and platforms, as physical mobility afforded by the migration and multiplication of screens, as socioeconomic mobility up and down the scale of value, and as affective mobility experienced as the

capacity to move and be moved. Taken together, this range of celebrity moves suggests that we should think of the TV screen itself as a device of mobilization, organizing the field of celebrity as a set of movements or traversals. By “TV screen,” I do not mean the metaphor of “the box” or even the literal flat screen to be found in homes and increasingly in public spaces. Rather, I mean the extension of televisual material – from long-form serializations to ancillary ephemera – across any screen with reception or playback capability. Paying attention to the way that such screens are used to mobilize celebrity means moving beyond the traditional field of tele-vision, which enables seeing across distance through a particular reception platform, to the broader field of cele-vision, which enables seeing celebrity through a range of platforms, channels and interlinked delivery mechanisms. Celestion, then, articulates the multiplication of screens on which celebrity can appear, as well as the sociotechnological interconnection of spaces in which these screens function. At the same time, celestion is an outgrowth of the transformations to television itself, both to its technology and its culture. Celestion thus names the everyday circulation of celebrity through the extensions of television culture as supported by the spread of screen technologies. To adapt Gernot Böhme’s phrase “invasive technification” (2012), we might call celestion the effect – or at least one effect – of the pervasive technification of television. More radically, from the perspective of celestion, celebrity can be seen as an agent of dispersal, a driver of the extension of the TV medium as it reaches feelers out across ever more screens. Indeed, I would claim that television has unfolded its latent potential for dispersal beyond the TV frame *in and through celebrity*. Celestion is thus both an element of television and yet broader in its scope, encompassing television programs as well as screen ephemera of promotion and personalization, while extending to television’s ancillary online, mobile and multiscreen cultures.

In order to investigate the dynamic interactions of celebrity and television screens, I will begin with the technological transformations of television in the postnetwork era before turning to three case studies of celebrity movement: the rise (and fall) of the reality TV star, the circulation of the nontelevision celebrity who traverses the TV screen, and the extensions beyond the televisual frame of the celebrity-at-large. I do not mean to imply with these case studies that there are only three kinds of celebrity; on the contrary, the mobility of celestion means that celebrity is endlessly diversifiable. Rather than suggesting a finite categorization of celebrity, I am using the case studies to demarcate three approaches to celestional mobility: the socioeconomic, the intermedial, and the affective. The first case will take Kim Kardashian as an exemplar of the social mobility promised by appearing “on TV,” to emphasize the labor and fragility of this upward mobility. The second case will address the media mobility afforded by the interplay of screens within the convergent exhibition space of television, focusing on the TV movie and the TV presenter through the figures of Julianne Moore and Russell Brand. Finally, the third case will highlight the small screen as a terrain of affective intimacy necessary to the process of celestification, even for the celebrity-at-large, such as the political celebrity, who has nothing to do with entertainment as such. If it is indeed the mobilization of the television screen – small and large, public and private, in the living room or in a pocket – that enables

the spread of celebrity, and if it is celebrity that drives the dispersal of the television screen, then “celevisation” is my term for these interlocking dynamics spearheaded by technological transformation.

The Technological Mobility of the TV Screen: Diversification and Convergence

No one would deny that we live in an era of rapid technological change, in which media studies scholars have become adept at tracing digital developments and their implications for media forms and cultures. It is less common, however, to consider the impact of technological transformation on the production of celebrity, particularly the way in which transformations of screen or interface technology have impacted on the construction, accessibility and figuration of celebrity. Film may be the original star-making apparatus, both in media history and media scholarship, but it tends not to generate new celebrity in the sense of a new *kind* of celebrity. While the film industry certainly produces celebrities as one of its central means of generating cultural impact and financial gain, the available slots for film stars seem to be finite, part of a closed system in which old stars are updated and replaced by newer models as the system strives to reproduce the conditions of its own production. Television, on the other hand, has been instrumental in generating new celebrity, even if this has not met with the same levels of respect as the self-reproducing formations of film celebrity. In the age of televisual transformation, new TV genres and para/textual forms have produced new kinds of celebrity, such as the reality TV star, the YouTube celebrity, or the micro-celebrity blogger who reports on both (see Marwick 2013 on micro-celebrities). More importantly, television has begun to serve as a necessary portal in the apparatus of celebrification, so that everyone who is, was or hopes to be known must cross the threshold of television for the sake of visibility. Whether for promotional purposes, for self-authorization, for the creative and financial advantages of long-form serialization, or simply for the sake of continuing relevance, celebrities exploit television as an attention-getting platform or, more accurately, as an anti-attention-attenuation device. If film was once the undisputed engine of the celebrity-making machine, then television has now moved to a central role in celebrity production. Notably, this has occurred at precisely the moment when it is undergoing transformation beyond the traditional borders of its own medium. Thus, to understand the technology of celebrity at this sociohistorical juncture means giving an account of television's own technological transformations.

A starting point for most television studies commentators is that television has entered the postnetwork age, an era of “dramatic changes in media technologies and audience use patterns” which Michael Curtin describes as “matrix media” (2009: 9). Going back to the 1980s, the erosion of network dominance can be traced to the deregulation of the broadcasting industry, which paved the way for the introduction of competing networks; the rising popularity of cable and satellite subscriptions, which spearheaded a rapid expansion of available channels; and the shift in

viewing patterns heralded by the widespread home use of the videocassette recorder (VCR), followed in the 1990s by DVD players, personal video recorders (PVRs), premium subscription services and early online viewing options. Taken together, these developments meant a fragmentation of the traditional broadcast TV audience, shifting the function of television from broadcasting to narrowcasting, or the channeling of heterogeneous content to aggregated niche audiences through a wired set of boxes (Lotz 2007: 28). With the spread of wireless technologies in the 2000s came additional time-shifting and ad-skirting technologies, such as video-on-demand and internet stream views, along with portable viewing devices and downloadable content that released users from time- and place-bound viewing (Marshall 2009). While such shifts have been grounds for prognostications about the demise of television, they have also more optimistically been hailed as the “rejuvenation” of television (Marshall 2004) and the birth of “convergence television,” according to which television makes use of digital formats and distribution technologies in order to further its own stylistic and industrial modes (Caldwell 2004). The promise of media convergence across formats and technologies is simultaneously the promise of expanded choice, expressed in what Amanda Lotz dubs “the mantra of the television future”: “whatever show you want, whenever you want, on whatever screen you want” (2007: 1).

As Henry Jenkins points out, however, convergence and divergence are two sides of the same coin, since blurring the lines between media means a multiplication of services and functions whenever one technology or platform expands its reach (2006: 10). Indeed, the one-box universe, or what Jenkins calls “the black box fallacy,” is a fantasy of convergence amidst a clutter of black boxes, a fond hope that all media content will eventually flow through one box or be accessible by the touch of one button (2006: 14). Of course, as VCRs become obsolete and DVD players and even PVRs threaten to go the same route in the age of downloadable media, the number of literal black boxes is in decline, but the “black box” as input/output mechanism still serves as metaphor for the diversity of distribution technologies that underpins the fantasy of convergence. In fact, it is becoming clear that “television convergence” actually means “a logic of ongoing proliferation, differentiation and reintegration” (Andrejevic 2009: 35). If you can truly watch any program, any time, anywhere through the technologies of time-, place- and even medium-shifting, then this points not to the demise but rather to the spread of television, to its dispersal through what David Marshall calls the “indiscrete” forms of its digitalization (2006: 637). Whereas once it had been enough to adjust our language from network to postnetwork and broadcasting to narrowcasting, it is now less a question of one-to-many or many-to-many transmission systems than a vast proliferation of distribution technologies mobilizing “indiscrete” digital content.

As the distribution of television content has moved from on-disk to downloads, and from downloads to streaming, this has presaged a blurring of the distinction between distributor and producer. The seepage that network and especially cable executives initially sought to stem by refusing to license popular shows to internet video services such as Hulu or YouTube (Richtel and Stelter 2010) has turned into a flood of licensing contracts for subscription streaming services, with Hulu

and Netflix currently ruling the roost in the United States. The real sea-change, however, is that these online distributors are leading a revolution in television culture by following cable networks such as HBO and Showtime into production. Of these, Netflix – not so long ago a mail-order DVD rental firm – is currently leading the field, having won three Emmy awards for *House of Cards* in 2013. While pay-TV subscriptions and set-top boxes are still widespread, the conventional distinctions between production, distribution and reception apparatuses are becoming hopelessly blurred: streaming services are competing with DVD box-sets to deliver series in toto; appointment viewing has given way to time-shifted and binge viewing; mobile phones work as TVs, while their inbuilt cameras enable viewers to become producers; and non-TV organizations such as Amazon and Condé Nast are poised to join Netflix and Hulu in making and streaming original content (Carter 2013). In this climate of diversification, it seems that there is more viewing going on, but increasingly less under the rubric of “television.” On the one hand, fewer and fewer people, certainly among younger generations, “watch TV” in the sense of turning on a set in their living room at an appointed time according to the programming schedule; on the other hand, everyone – whether they “watch TV” or not – seems to know the leading shows, watch the major sports events, and/or be familiar with the current clutch of news presenters and tabloid headliners. As Lotz notes, the new technologies that have “liberated the place-based and domestic nature of television use” have brought “related shifts in distribution possibilities that allow us to watch television on computer screens and mobile phones ... thereby creating a vast expansion” of production sources, revenue streams and audience channels (2007: 5). This constitutes the spread or dispersion of television in the age of new and mobile media, which in turn has implications for the mobility and pervasiveness of celebrity.

This is not simply a technological diversification, however, for the multiplication of diverse screens is matched by a convergence of social practices or, better, the practice of social convergence. Indeed, the counterweight to “spread” might be dubbed the “(re)socialization of TV,” a phrase that brings together a number of recent shifts aimed at increasing the interactivity and community basis of TV viewing through online and mobile platforms, such as SMS-based TV (Beyer et al. 2007), multiscreen viewing, social TV apps and practices of “connected viewing” (Holt and Sanson 2014), which includes digitally supported synchronous viewing across a distance (Giridharadas 2014). Multiscreen viewing, also called “second-screening,” is a phenomenon arising from the rapid uptake of wireless mobile technologies, which refers to the habits of media consumers who no longer face only one screen when they watch television. Alongside TV viewing, they are also online through a laptop, tablet or smartphone, accessing numerous websites and diverse functionalities, including social media, e-commerce sites, online magazines, blogs, etc. Surveys carried out in 2012 on second-screen viewing by such heavyweights as Nielsen, Google, BSkyB and the Pew Research Center in the US and UK found that between 70 percent and 80 percent of respondents use a second screen while watching TV, although a relatively low percentage of this activity – somewhere around 20 percent in total according to the Google and Pew Center surveys – actually complements the television viewing through information searches, social media discussions or browsing for products

seen on TV (Dredge 2012). In some surveys the incidence of complementary “simultaneous usage” is higher, with Ericsson’s 2012 study of TV habits across 40 countries reporting that 62 percent of people use social media while watching TV, with 40 percent discussing the shows they are currently watching on social networks (Dredge 2012). It is here that celestion increasingly comes into play, since much of the complementary second-screen practices involve online searches for or discussions about the stars on the primary screen. Through such instances of simultaneous usage, the celebrities appear on multiple screens during viewing, perhaps even in their own persona on Twitter feeds, which in turn suggests the centrality of second-screening to celestion dispersal.

Furthermore, increasing the accessibility and screen circulation of celebrities is part of the impetus behind the introduction of social TV apps. For instance, Zeebox (now Beamly), launched in late 2011, is intended as a second-screen device that constitutes a social feedback loop by linking users to information sites, products, celebrity news and their own social networks while they and their “friends” (in the Facebook sense) watch TV. Zeebox’s promotional material promises viewers “zeetags” (pointers to products), “hot tabs” (trending information about shows) and online chatting opportunities in “rooms” to make TV watching “a viewing party” (Zeetab launch email). Most interesting for my purposes is the proposed functionality of Zeebox that allows viewers to engage with social media networks to find out what celebrities are watching and then to watch “with” them, via tweets.¹ In effect, this means not only visibility for celebrities who are not necessarily on the primary screen, but also that celebrities become the arbiters of taste when it comes to television viewing, since in theory their social media posts have the power to “pull” viewers from one show to another based on their own viewership. This is social convergence with gusto, nearly a decade on from the theories of convergent television propagated by Caldwell and Jenkins. Of the five fundamental changes to “the look of television” listed by Caldwell in 2004 as an effect of convergence technologies, three elements at least have proven prescient: the expansion of ancillary textuality, which now includes searches, updates and chats made available through second screens and social TV apps; the conglomeration of textuality, which converges these diverse discursive forms onto networked online and mobile platforms; and the marketing of textuality, now made so convenient that product placement in a TV program – whether tagged as such on the primary or the secondary screen – can lead to a shopping experience in a few clicks (Caldwell 2004: 46).

The transformation of screen technologies is thus converging viewers, texts and markets, but, as both Caldwell and Lotz remind us, such changes have much more to do with a transformation of culture than simply with technological transformation. If, as Lotz writes, “[a] television is not just a machine, but also the set of behaviors and practices associated with its use” (2007: 29), then the dispersal of indiscrete celestion content across diverse distribution and conglomeration networks is affecting the how and why of celestion practices. Rather than driving us to ask what remains of the television medium, this becomes a question of the interface (Galloway 2012), since the current transformations have less to do with television than with the *screen*, in terms of proliferating sites and sizes and interconnections. For the purposes of

understanding television, it is thus the interface rather than the medium that should underpin our thinking about the relational transformations between television and celebrity.

The proliferation of screens has wide-ranging implications for celebrity, for central to all of these transformations is the figure and role of the star that sustains and is sustained by the dispersed television apparatus. Indeed, it is not too far-fetched to say that television and celebrity go hand in glove as never before, precisely at the point where the boundaries between television, film and other media are beginning to blur. The expansion of fictional series production initially to cable and now to non-TV networks, alongside the increase in production values made possible by subscription-service capital on the one hand and high-definition technology on the other, has expanded the opportunities for high-profile celebrity presence on television and simultaneously raised the cachet of TV production. Thus, with the blurring of boundaries between production and distribution channels comes an erasure of the erstwhile brick wall between film star and television personality, with “movie stars” now appearing with increasing frequency in television movies, series and one-off episodes. This mobility of the A-list across screens is met with the increased production of celebrities “from below,” as television forms such as reality TV, talk shows and news/current affairs channels generate circuits of celebrities whose status is then sustained through networked ancillary screen cultures. Thus, whether Jeff Probst is live-tweeting *Survivor* episodes, Lisa Kudrow is fronting the series *Web Therapy* on Showtime’s web channel, David Fincher is winning the Best Director of a TV Drama Emmy award for a show (*House of Cards*) produced by non-TV network Netflix, or Stephen Fry is using a Zeebox-enabled Twitter feed to comment on the TV show he is currently watching, all of these celebrities are engaging in TV beyond television, with the express purpose of making themselves as entertainment commodities more readily accessible to viewers within an ever more networked community. Each of these screens and second-screen overlays, of course, has its own particular economy as well as its own “feel,” but for now suffice it to say that the ongoing technological transformation of TV means a diversification of screens, which in turn is generating – and is sustained by – greater celebrity mobility across a socially convergent terrain. If, as Colin MacCabe points out, the term celebrity itself includes “an inbuilt notion of change and transformation” (2014), then it is within the field of television that such transformative mobility is made most manifest.

Going Up, Going Down: Reality TV Celebrity

In discussions of televisual or celebrity transformations in the last 15 years, the emergence of reality TV has repeatedly been taken to be a key driver or at least symptom of change (Spigel 2004: 3–4). In an article on the “changing power of celebrity,” David Marshall notes the tight imbrication of celebrity and reality TV, pointing out that “These programs ... are very controlled and contrived constructions of celebrity discourse in and of themselves” (2006: 643). For viewers and pundits, the relation between reality TV and “contrived constructions of celebrity discourse” has long



Figure 16.1 Kim Kardashian at the hands of the celebrity-making machine (Photo by Tim Lundin/TDLphoto.com)

been synonymous with the negative discourse associated with the “reality TV star,” who is relentlessly figured as a talentless wannabe and exhibitionist, willing to expose his or her private life and much more for a chance at the short-lived celebrity tenure codified in pop culture as “15 minutes of fame.”² Chris Rojek, who in 2001 invented the term “celetoid” to describe “any form of compressed, concentrated, attributed celebrity” (2001: 20), has since revised his earlier theory into a short-life and a long-life variant of the celetoid, with the latter achieving semidurable fame despite having “no perceptible talents or disciplined accomplishments” (2012: 165). At the same time, celebrity reality TV formats tend to be reflexive about the pervasiveness of the fame fantasy in everyday life, as well as about their own function as a televisual technology that props up celebrity culture (Kavka 2012).

This reflexivity often has less to do with durability than with gradations of celebrity value, which is part and parcel of the reality celebrity economy. Reality TV producers as well as participants know all too well the brevity and mutability of celebrity, which is experienced by the “reality TV star” as a struggle to move up – and prevent oneself from sliding back down – the alphabet scale that represents hierarchical value. For all celebrities, the financial capital to be gained from self-commodification (Turner 2007) is not necessarily synonymous with the social capital accrued, and those celebrities created by reality TV, itself a culturally devalued form with a low entry threshold, may well earn sizable pay packets but suffer the slings and arrows of public disdain. Any number of examples might arise for this contradictory socio-economic valuation of the reality TV star, but the case study I have in mind is Kim Kardashian (figure 16.1), who has been keeping the gossip magazines, Twitter/

Instagram feeds and connected viewing apps busy with the wedding debacle of 2011, the pregnancy and birth of 2012–13, and the postnatal remodeling since then. In terms of sheer exposure, Kim and the Kardashian clan ought to figure as top-listed celebrities, if measured in terms of frequency of media appearances or revenue generation (Kim alone was estimated by the *International Business Times* to have earned \$6 million in 2010, making her the highest-paid reality star (Villamar 2010)). Nonetheless, in part because of her roots in reality TV and in part because of her constant use of social media for purposes of self-exposure (quite literally), Kim Kardashian's celebrity persona has very low social value and often figures as an exemplar of "what's wrong with celebrity today" (i.e., celebrities are talentless, famous for being famous, self-obsessed, etc.).

In Chris Rojek's terms, Kim and the rest of the Kardashians are properly celestoids, but paradoxically highly durable ones. The academic work that has appeared so far on the Kardashians has largely focused, quite rightly, on Kim's sexual body as the vehicle of her celebrity exposure (e.g. Sastre 2014). Alexandra Sastre provides a useful, compressed timeline of Kim Kardashian's rise to prominence, which began not with the reality TV show but with the February 2007 release by Vivid Entertainment of a leaked sex tape that Kardashian made in 2003 with then-boyfriend Ray J. The release of the tape – despite Kardashian's protestations of surprise and shame – led to the commissioning in October 2007 of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, which then debuted on the E! channel in December that year with a pilot that included family conversations about the sex tape, in preparation for Kim's pending appearance on *The Tyra Banks Show* to discuss it. Combined with Kardashian's December 2007 centerfold shoot for *Playboy*, this concatenation of events suggests the interconnect-edness of various media forms within television, especially the prescient porousness of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, at the same time as supporting Sastre's (2014) claim that the nodal point among these connections is Kardashian's body, positioned both as the source of her family's income and as the platform for her own and her sisters' celebration.

As with television's dispersal across media platforms and social connectivities, the Kardashian celebrity construction extends to social media. Each Kardashian sister, including now the two youngest, maintains a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Celebuzz. Of these, Kim Kardashian is the most ardent and active social media user, the one who appreciates, to paraphrase Nick Couldry, that "to be off-screen, offline, or out of print is ... no longer satisfactory, or empowering, in a world where the acquisition of fame is the affirmation of the self" (cited in Redmond 2006: 29). As the Kardashians well know, constant televisual, tabloid and social media presence is crucial to the promotion and maintenance of their celebrity status, producing familiarity and even intimacy with their audience to ensure the sustenance of their fame. This operates both as a marketing engine for their business enterprises and as an example of what David Marshall has called the "presentational regime" of celebrity culture ushered in by new media forms. As Marshall argues, "there has been an explosion of presenting one's self online in the most public way" (2006: 637, 638) and, although he is referring to the democratic aspect of social media that allows everyone to take a stab at celebrity through self-presentation, the point also

holds for celebrities like the Kardashians who are constantly laboring at celebrity maintenance through the self-presentational portals of media. The private-made-public self has thus shifted beyond the traditional frame of reality TV to social media, where the intermediaries of producers and managers are bypassed in favor of direct publication of the private self through tweets and photo postings. This is nowhere so obvious as in the popularization of the “selfie,” the photo taken of oneself on one’s phone, which in 2013 entered the official lexicon through its adoption by the *Oxford English Dictionary* but also entered the celebrity arsenal as a primary means of self-authorization. With her near-obsessive fondness for revealing selfies taken in the bathroom mirror, Kim Kardashian has become the queen of self-exposure. In fact, 2013 saw the invention of the neologism “belfie” in honor of the many self-authored shots posted to social media of Kardashian’s famous backside.

With this, we return to Sastre’s point about the family empire being built on the foundation of Kim Kardashian’s body. This is not, however, as solid a foundation as it may seem, for it is precisely here that the mobility effect of Kardashian’s rising and falling social value comes into play. Having capitalized on the publicity of the sex tape and even overcome its negative social and moral implications, Kardashian’s capital rose from 2008 to 2011 in terms of media exposure and income. 2011 brought an engagement and a highly public wedding to basketball player Kris Humphries, which was screened as a multi-episode reality TV special later available for purchase on iTunes, but this heavily sponsored and highly lucrative event turned into a public relations disaster when Kim filed for divorce 72 days after the wedding. What appeared to be the cynical use of romance for purposes of financial gain resulted in a sudden drop of social value for the reality TV star, who was quickly returned to the discursive position of talentless wannabe who does not deserve her celebrity. Kris Humphries’ own celebrity value, worth far less than the Kardashians’, meant that had he stayed he would at best have been pulled into the context of reality TV celebrity rather than helping to pull Kim Kardashian out. What was required by the celebrity-advancing machinery was a different kind of relationality, a celebrity bridge harnessed to a media industry with greater social value than reality TV. Enter, in relatively short order between April 2012 and August 2013, Kanye West as Kim’s boyfriend, baby-daddy and fiancé, bringing with him as celebrity dowry the social capital of hip-hop. As a result Kim Kardashian’s own star is again on the rise, linked not coincidentally with her gradual disentanglement from the television enterprise, albeit not from social media. There is a complex argument to be made here, following Sastre, about the role of race in relation to the entertainment industries on the one hand and Kardashian’s own sexualized body on the other. It lies outside the scope of this chapter, however, to do more than suggest that Kardashian’s association with the black male body of hip-hop aligns her with a source of cultural authentication that is meant to serve her rising celebrity capital. As Kim Kardashian beats a retreat from reality TV, but not from the belfie or the soft-porn music video (as in Kanye West’s “Bound 2”), it remains to be seen whether she can lay to rest the uncertain social mobility of the reality TV star or whether her own discursive celebrity construction will drain West of his social capital. Reality TV, after all, has a long reach when it comes to celebrity mobility.

Media Mobility of the Distributed Celebrity

While the Kardashians – despite their extensions into gossip magazines, social media and self-merchandising – are firmly linked to television through their categorization as reality TV stars, other kinds of celebrity associated with entertainment media increasingly have a relationship of traversal rather than strict belonging to television. With the blurring of boundaries between television and other media forms, as well as the increasing interpenetration of distribution and production systems, it is less and less the case that celebrities “belong” to a particular medium or that their value is attached to and decreed by that medium. Thus, when Amy Poehler, co-presenting the 70th annual Golden Globe awards in 2013 with Tina Fey, joked that “Only at the Golden Globes do the beautiful people of film rub shoulders with the rat-faced people of television,” the jibe worked precisely because such a strict division between the beautiful and the rat-faced is no longer possible. As Conan O’Brien pointed out as early as 2006, “movie stars” regularly appear as characters on TV series, whether primary characters like Alec Baldwin in *30 Rock* (NBC, 2006–13) or secondary characters like Rob Lowe in *Brothers & Sisters* (ABC, 2006–11) and *Parks and Recreation* (where he co-starred with Amy Poehler; NBC, 2009–15). Even more common is the appearance of movie stars on television through the vehicle of made-for-TV movies or the rescreening of films on television after the initial release date. In the age of television, of course, audiences are no longer necessarily accessing movie stars through the frame of the traditional film screen or even the TV set. While, on the one hand, the options for reception multiply across online and mobile platforms, delivering movie stars for private consumption “anytime, anywhere,” television is at the same time becoming more public, as the number of TV screens explodes across public spaces, from bars to gyms to airports and airplanes, where back-of-seat screens indiscriminately remediate television and film material, now recut for in-flight entertainment (Groening 2008). Given the dispersive capacity of televisualization, celebrity is increasingly using TV as the basis for mobility across a range of media platforms, undertaking a self-distribution that exploits the centripetal and even centrifugal force of TV in the age of television.

To take one example, whereas the made-for-TV movie used to be synonymous with low-budget, low-cachet films, situated on the cultural scale a notch above direct-to-video releases, in the last decade the category has shaken off its lowest-common-denominator associations (along with the “made-for”) and become a neutral term referring to production source. With the premium subscription channels having entered the field of production, and frontrunner HBO having established itself as a studio with its production arm HBO Films, the term “TV movie” now designates any feature-length, one-off program that is produced for and distributed by a television network. Thus, Hollywood A-listers Michael Douglas and Matt Damon appeared in a “TV movie” on the initial HBO airing of *Behind the Candelabra* (directed by Steven Soderbergh, HBO Films) in May 2013, despite the fact that the film was simultaneously released on the festival circuit, competing for the Palme d’Or at Cannes prior to receiving cinematic release outside the US.



Figure 16.2 Julianne Moore as Sarah Palin watches Tina Fey as Sarah Palin (*Game Change*, 2012, Dir. Jay Roach, Prod. HBO Films)

Similarly, the ubiquitously distributed Julianne Moore took on the central role in the HBO-produced TV film *Game Change* (directed by Jay Roach) about the 2008 Republican vice-presidential nomination of Sarah Palin, a film which debuted on HBO in March 2012 to much fanfare before being released on DVD. The film won three Golden Globe awards and four Primetime Emmy awards, along with numerous other accolades arising from nominations in the “television film” or “television movie” category. *Game Change* is a particularly reflexive example of the televisual traversal of celebrity: Julianne Moore, known largely as an arthouse film star, has crossed over to television in order to play Sarah Palin, the governor of Alaska turned vice-presidential candidate, who herself became ubiquitous on television screens in the lead-up to the 2008 US election before tempering her political career with reality TV celebrity in *Sarah Palin’s Alaska* (TLC, 2010–11). The celebrity figure of Palin is thus itself a centripetal product of television, as *Game Change* acknowledges. In one much-discussed scene from the TV film, Julianne Moore as Palin watches “herself” on screen being spoofed by the real Tina Fey in documentary footage from *Saturday Night Live* (figure 16.2), which in turn reflects on the intercelebrity humor of *Saturday Night Live*’s staging of an encounter between Fey’s Palin and the real Palin a month after the original sketch aired in 2008. Television is nothing if not self-reflexive about celebrity.

The point to be made here is that, in the many traversals of celebrity across television, TV is revealed to be both centripetal and centrifugal. It is centripetal because celebrities generated in other entertainment media and even other fields of visibility, such as politics, are pulled onto television for the sake of career maintenance (e.g., promotion, endorsement, visibility) and career extension (e.g., roles in episodes, series and movies). On the other hand, it is centrifugal whenever television is instrumental in launching a celebrity career that then crosses over to other media forms. Such launches are not limited to reality TV stars, as we saw with Kim Kardashian, but often engage in celebrity construction out of the bits and pieces of screen time that constitute the ephemera of television. To take an example from the British side of the Atlantic, we might turn to Russell Brand,

a British comedian and sometime film star who gained cinematic recognition in the UK in the school comedy *St Trinian's* (directed by Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson, 2007) before coming to the notice of American audiences in the Judd Apatow-produced *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* (directed by Nicholas Stoller, 2008). As a bad-boy figure due to his erstwhile hard-partying, drug- and alcohol-addicted lifestyle, Brand's celebrity persona was built up by the British tabloids "as a modern-day Dionysus" (Rojek 2012: 4). He is thus linked in public memory to a set of sackings and scandals arising from his transgressive behavior in the media (e.g., his 2008 enforced break with the BBC after tasteless prank calls made to actor Andrew Sachs), yet Brand has bounced back to increased visibility on each occasion, often crossing over media forms in the process. In October 2013, Brand received both praise and criticism in traditional and social media for guest-editing an issue of the political magazine *New Statesman*, despite his admission that he does not vote.

What has largely disappeared from public memory, however, is the process of celebrification by which Brand seems to have sprung ready-formed into celebrity culture. Brand initially appeared as a TV presenter on British cable and digital channels, beginning with a stint in 2000 as a video journalist on MTV (he was fired after 9/11 for showing up dressed as Osama bin Laden), before starring in his own comedy program *Re:Brand* on the now-defunct digital channel UK Play (in 2002). In 2004 he landed the role that gained him longevity and notoriety as the presenter of *Big Brother's Big Mouth* (E4, 2004–7), an interactive companion program to the UK *Big Brother* that sought responses to goings-on in the BB house from guest celebrities, a studio audience and viewers via phone, email and SMS messaging. Brand's success on this program, based in his ability to connect interactive digital television with celebrity culture while at the same time increasing his own celebrity capital, led to chat shows, radio work and a series of high-profile TV hosting roles (such as the 2006 NME and 2007 BRIT awards in the music industry, and three stints presenting the MTV Video Music Awards in 2008, 2009 and 2012). Brand's celebrification, in other words, exemplifies television's function as a medial centrifuge.

On the one hand, such presenting roles are the ephemera of television – transient, interchangeable and of far less value than sustained performances in TV series. On the other hand, as television producers vie to fill 24/7 programming across a huge range of cable, satellite and digital channels, such ephemera now constitute the "indiscrete" elements that allow for the dispersion of celebrity content and discourse through digitalization (Marshall 2006). Just as television spreads through dialectical processes of convergence and diversification, so celebrity exploits the centripetal and centrifugal dynamics of its indiscrete phenomena – sketch shows, studio shows, awards shows, even TV movies – as these become attached to second-screen discussions and repostings on blogs, boards and social media sites. This is the material out of which television creates and maintains celebrities, so that people who do not necessarily "belong" to television are nonetheless distributed across it, riding its extended reach on the way to becoming recognizable mainstays of celebrity culture.

The Pop-up Celestity: Affect beyond the TV Screen

If television has been moving beyond its traditional limits, whether literally going mobile or mobilizing new opportunities of distribution, production and reception, then celestity has been moving with it by capitalizing on the increased affordances of the screen in the postnetwork era. Beyond the social and technological mobility afforded by the proliferation of screens, however, there is another form of mobility that might be called the mobilization of affect itself. Celestity culture has always been a feeling culture, which is to say that generating intimate connections through the “emotion work” of stars has long been the purpose and effect of the celestity-making apparatus (Nunn and Biressi 2010). Indeed, feeling is a key factor in distinguishing between celestity – which is replete with affective intensity – and the more rational category of “renown,” despite the fact that this distinction has often been cast in the moral terms of meritocracy, from Daniel Boorstin in 1961 onward (Boorstin 1992). Of course, the feelings generated for celebrities by the apparatus of fame are necessarily one-way, falling into the category described as “para-social relationships,” or an “intimacy between strangers” that Chris Rojek, following Richard Schickel, identifies as the crux of celestity culture (Rojek 2012: 125–41). The “impossible” nature of these intimate feelings has long been a reason for their disavowal or dismissal as false, as evidenced in the wake of the outpouring of para/social grief after the sudden death of Princess Diana in 1997 (see Anderson and Mullen 1998). My concern here, however, is less with the reality of such emotions than the way that affect facilitates the overlap of celestity with television culture, especially through new technological forms.

As a domestic apparatus, television has long been deemed a medium of intimacy, on the basis of which scholars like John Ellis and David Marshall have argued that television celebrities are characterized by an aura of familiarity (Marshall 1997) rather than the aura of distance which has traditionally enveloped film stars (Ellis 1982). As I have argued here, however, this distinction is breaking down and the affect generated by celestity culture is now seeping across a broad array of screens, from the emotions that attach to celestity personas as they pop up in various roles (including *Schadenfreude* as “a negative capacity in socially affective relations”; Cross and Littler 2010: 397), to the feelings fielded and expressed by celebrities on social media platforms as they pursue avenues of self-personification (Marshall 2010: 44–5). Indeed, Twitter can be described as an intensive affective field, where the interactions of celestity and noncelestity users articulate how they have been moved during their traversal of other screens. This notion of movement is more than a figure of speech, if we draw on Gilles Deleuze’s Spinozan understanding of affect as a body’s dynamic capacity to move and be moved. Broadly speaking, this is the approach taken in much recent work on affect in media studies (see Gregg and Seigworth 2010), but here it is enough to note that the very dynamism of affect means that it is uncontainable, always extensive as well as intensive, and in itself functions as a synonym for spread or dispersion as one body is moved by the next and the next. Further, unlike the concerns about the pseudo-intimacy of mediated celestity culture, affect is equally transmissible across physiologies and screens, however

invisibly it may flow (Kavka 2014). Indeed, affect can be defined as the dynamic of transmission itself, the force that pushes networked users to pursue celebrity from one screen to the next, while these same affective flows bring the various screen usages into celevisual convergence.

The mobilizations of affect are thus at work everywhere in celebrity culture, including the case studies already discussed. Certainly, reality television thrives on emotional drama, with its close-ups and confessionals (Redmond 2011), but it is also adept – as the Kardashians show – at channeling this accrued affect through related media, where it becomes intensified and differentiated into various screen-supported streams. While scripted programming creates entertainment out of generating emotion, in the broader field of television such contained expressions are often secondary to the feelings generated at the dynamic interface between celebrity screen traversals, such as Julianne Moore as Sarah Palin watching Tina Fey's impersonation of Palin, or Russell Brand on a talk show mobilizing his "bad boy" persona to promote a movie role. Despite gradations of celebrity status, none of these affective relations can any longer be fit into the binary of familiarity versus distance, precisely because affect enables the distribution of celebrity across a proliferation of screens.

This holds not only for celebrity produced by entertainment media, but also for what we might call the celebrity-at-large, by which I mean people whose renown, however accrued, has been charged with feelings of intimacy through their multiple appearances on personalized and privatized screens. The most obvious examples currently come from the field of politics, especially in the West, where leaders increasingly exploit media technologies for the sake of greater affective connection with constituencies, which in turn raises their celebrity value. Barack Obama, for instance, based his first election campaign on the mobilization of grassroots communities through new media mechanisms, but the operations of television mean that the political message cannot function in a vacuum, for its dispersal in the affective field means that the political messenger is simultaneously produced as a celebrity-at-large. Michelle Obama by extension falls into this category (figure 16.3), even though her celebrity appearances are highly regulated so as not to taint her political value. As First Lady her affective role is to be the point of intimate access to the presidency, a role she fulfills by appearing across screens in carefully composed shots to designate the First Family's leisure pursuits, or in more orchestrated spots such as a family-friendly Sesame Street video to promote healthy eating in color-coded companionship with Elmo.

Of greater interest is the affective intensity generated by the accidental appearance of the celebrity-at-large, such as the shot seen across the world of Danish prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, in attendance at Nelson Mandela's funeral, taking a selfie with Barack Obama and David Cameron on either side leaning in with silly smiles. This shot proved to be affectively dense, not only because of Thorning-Schmidt's later defense that "it was a bit of fun" (cited in Anthony 2013), but more pointedly because of the shot's inclusion, just beyond the frame of the selfie, of a grim-faced Michelle Obama staring intently forward. Debates about whether Michelle Obama's stare was to be read as disapproval of funeral selfies or of Barack's smiling proximity to a blonde prime minister then moved at lightning speed across televisual, tabloid and social media screens. Whatever the correct reading, this



Figure 16.3 Michelle Obama on camera being caught on camera (June 2, 2011) (Photo: Lance Cheung)

particular selfie demonstrates the dispersive mobility of small-screen content, with the screen itself serving as a vehicle for the affective transmissions that sustain celebrity.

Screen mobilizations of affect are spreading, linked as they are to the greater distribution of celebrity by means of the proliferating technologies that constitute the reach of television. Ultimately, these networked screens tell us that there is something tentacular about celebrity: celebrities operate like feelers, making manifest the reach of mediated affect while exploiting this reach for purposes of their own on-screen extension. This is not to make a case for either technological or celebrity determinism, since neither technology nor celebrity alone is a condition for the dispersal of television. Rather, I have attempted to argue for the interdependence of televisual and celebrity transformations. While the proliferating television screen organizes the movements of celebrity, celebrity in turn drives the dispersions of television. This produces what I have called the field of television, a technological hybrid created by the proliferation of screens that articulates the way in which television and celebrity are converging in divergent forms.

Notes

- 1 Zeebox makes this available via a feature called Starwatch, explained by co-founder Anthony Rose as follows: “We made a list of about 400 celebrities, from Alan Sugar

and Stephen Fry to politicians, Radio 5 Live sports hosts and so on. And when they tweet around a programme, our servers follow them and hashtag it, then assign them to that programme in Zeebox and show their icon in the interface" (cited in Dredge 2011).

- 2 The phrase refers to Andy Warhol's prescient comment in 1968 that "in the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes," followed up by an early MTV talk show hosted by Andy Warhol called *Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes* (1985–7).

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Stardom, Celebrity, and the Moral Economy of Pretending

Barry King

In the analysis of celebrity, a specific vocabulary of eminence comes into play. Idol, icon, character, figure, persona, image, hero, archetype and role model are some of the terms deployed by different authors, often with an exclusive focus on one term in particular and without an explicit attempt to define its place in the constellation or field of terms. David Marshall (2010) has identified a range of macro-trends associated with the intensified interest of the media and the general public in the phenomenon of celebrity personas. I agree with his view that today, *persona* is a sociologically pervasive term and, in practice, a key mode of experiencing selfhood. My concern in what follows is to track the formation of persona from within the specialized realm of acting as a performance practice on stage and on screen. Although it would be somewhat restrictive to see the current interest in persona as solely arising from the impact of acting in general and screen acting in particular, the metaphorical fecundity of acting has made its own a particular contribution to the current obsession with identity; not merely because acting seems to be a condensation for social interaction per se, but also because acting, on stage and in its proliferating manifestations on big and small screens, is a thoroughly mediated (and remediated) process that produces professionally polished self-images. These images are selected and edited for the best effect. In this manner there is a common status shared by stars and celebrities, regardless of their actual level of skill, that we amateur performers – in both senses, loving and semiskilled (or, alas, even unskilled) – are encouraged to imitate, in order to negotiate the perils and pitfalls of fresh and unscripted everyday encounters. Considered this way, stars and celebrities are exemplars – always allowing that some may fall from grace – and placeholders occupying a preferential place on the societal scale of worthiness or prestige. This place is a technologically produced and sustained order of excellence that creates what I shall term a moral economy of pretending. I shall consider the general features of this economy by examining some key concepts.

Persona

As is well understood, the word *persona* derives from Latin, meaning to speak through a mask (a meaning that also refers back to Greek drama).¹ As a term of art, *persona* is taken to have a self-evident quality, but in fact it is a cover term for a number of modes of self-presentation, some explicitly theatrical and some connected to the regularities of everyday exchange. As the title suggests, Erving Goffman's influential work *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* introduced the perspective of social dramaturgy. But in that text Goffman does not in fact use the term *persona*, preferring the term *self* to stand for the permeable line between theatrical and nontheatrical behavior. Yet despite the use of historical illustrations Goffman's work is fundamentally ahistorical, treating the term "self" naturalistically when other writers have expressed a pervasive uncertainty. This tack means that Goffman's work is not actually performative enough – it presumes a stable self, or at least one capable of consciously formulating strategies of pretense, if not deception. This limitation might be excused since his book was first published in the late 1950s, and could not benefit from the current perfusion of a wide range of social activities with the concept of the performative (Kershaw 2001). But this qualification doesn't quite work, because there is a long tradition – certainly beyond Goffman's indebtedness to symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School – that had raised questions about the nature of identity and the related notions of truth and integrity (Taylor 1991). In particular, there was a concern to preserve a distinction, which Goffman nonchalantly elides, between a self fashioned for ritual or semiritual interaction and a self fashioned for commercial exchange (MacIntyre 2007: 115–16). *Persona* is an axial concept that bears the traces of this transformation and its unresolved contradictions in a society dominated by capitalist social relationships of market exchange.

In an English context, the idea of *persona* emerges in the eighteenth century with the seismic shift away from a customary society in which being and seeming are normatively equated: people are expected to be what they seem to be and may be punished, for example under sumptuary laws, for seeming otherwise. As a capitalistic social order imposes its key reality terms of exchange and the market, the early modern concept of the self emerges which challenges the view of customary society that people have natural selves, defined by their social position. Philosophically David Hume, following the lead given by John Locke, established a new conception of identity in which the outer surface of the self is distinguished from the inner self and its motivations.² In Hume's view, human identity is a condition of pervasive existential uncertainty, locked in the prison of its accumulated experiences and forever uncertain of what is to come (Hume 1969). The self becomes an object to be studied and manipulated, in order to protect the self from the manipulations of others and to efficaciously influence others to one's advantage (Locke 1996).

It was the accomplishment of Anthony Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield – Goffman's muse in this regard – to popularize the arts of self-presentation and etiquette as a set of rules for those seeking to make their way in "polite" society, dominated by the values and norms of the aristocracy (Stanhope 1998). Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* were viewed by contemporaries as the apogee of cynicism. But Chesterfield was

a typical representative of his age, capturing relational anxieties that went beyond the jaded experiences of the aristocratic diplomat and courtier that he was (Pullen 1968; Carter 2002).

The pervasive concern evident in Chesterfield's day over the relationship between being and seeming had an immediate instrumental aspect. As market forms of exchange increasingly diffused through customary society, a chronic condition of uncertainty invaded the relationships of exchange. This uncertainty, if (so to speak) native to unregulated market exchanges, was compounded by the shortage of coinage, which called for a reliance on instruments of credit as so many promises to pay in future, thus linking the personal qualities of honesty and trustworthiness with the actual possession or lack of cash. Where economic relationships had once been regulated by community norms, caveat emptor now became the watchword of exchange as more and more aspects of social life were subordinated and subsumed under commodity relationships. The buyer – and all persons, even sellers, were fundamentally buyers – seeking to advance his or her self-interests in the exchange of commodities faced the prospect of a disadvantageous outcome with greatly decreased opportunity for redress. Yet it was not merely an instrumental matter – a calculus of immediate risk – but a pressing moral and philosophical problem that seemed to destabilize the very basis of identity itself, producing “unclassifiable” people (Sennett 1978: 49).

The growth of the book trade, and such harbingers of a mass periodical press as the miscellany magazine (the foremost of which were *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, edited and largely written by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele), made the author's persona a central trope regulating the relationship with readers. Yet constructing a persona for the purposes of social interaction in public and through the press was not seen as a protean free-play, as found in some versions of postmodernism. The author could assume the persona of a detached observer in order to have the freedom to expose hypocrisy and folly. But this was not a morally free ticket. It was expected that he (or, less likely given rigid gender stereotyping, she) would not be found to have the same weaknesses that he or she lambasted in others (Weinbrot 1983; Lowenthal and Fiske 1956).

At this early stage of capitalist development, when the first engines of mass publicity were developing, authenticity emerged as a core value in celebrity culture because it was also a core value in public culture. Especially in metropolitan centers such as London, the eighteenth-century theater – as a unique public institution, open to all for the cost of a ticket – persuasively embodied the new logic of identities required by the deepening onset of commodity exchange. This was not just a metaphorical relationship, but rather a metonymic relationship, since the production and consumption of plays and entertainments, and the registration of actors' and performers' fame, was a function of marketability. Since the actor or performer was directly connected to the theatergoing audience as a servant for hire, he or she modeled a new kind of public visibility: an individual of ignoble birth or at best middling standing might attain public prominence in a society where prominence was the entitlement of the aristocracy. The dubiousness of the actor, as a low-born person not automatically deserving a place in public culture, intensified the corporeal nature of acting

and performance as work. Displaying his or her body as a spectacle, men disturbed the heteronormative expectation that only females should be erotic spectacles, and females, the expectation of modesty in public. In either case, the leading or star actor in vying with his or her peers to be an enticing spectacle was a “sexual suspect” (Straub 1991).

The imperative of commercial ingratiation, which the commercial theater of eighteenth-century London enshrined in its organization and systems of reward, meant that the substance of the actor – looks, physique, voice quality – impacted the theorization of acting as a performance. It was exactly at the point of development of the “star” concept that acting underwent a complex and long-drawn-out transformation from a convention-centered, rhetorical process to one in which the actor’s individual performance idiolect emerged as the distinctive mark of presence. Audiences had always watched the real person of the actor alongside the assumed character; the difference was that the real person, rather than a collective symbol of a “real” person, is prioritized in the generation of significance and meaning (King 2015). The aspect of this shift’s many features to be emphasized here is adaption of the Cartesian model of the self as a thinking machine, managing its “passions” to produce certain predictable effects to satisfy the demands of performance practice.

David Garrick, credited with being the first English star, was a legendary exponent of the corporeal entailment, making a calculated use of facial expressions and gestures to signal “inner” passions, rather than leaning back on a system of stylized poses and gestures (Roach 1985). In the immediate context of performance, the mediator of the actor’s relationship with the audience is a character, either explicitly fictional, quasi-fictional or as an apparent private person (however mediated). Through the choice of the route through character, the actor engages with public expectations and activates a vector of identity reference – a choice never completely free, given the limitations of his or her appearance, figure and vocal abilities.

The Instrumentalization of Identity in Performance

In essaying a specific character, the actor is faced with a strategic choice: to what degree does he or she deflect or inflect given personal (physical and behavioral) qualities into the performance of character (Rozik 2002)? A character actor, in the strong sense of the term, aims to deflect as many as possible of the semantic entailments that arise from his or her physical being (habitual gestures, looks and voice), replacing them with “fresh” sets of behavior that are plausible for the character as written. Plausibility is a complex phenomenon. It is not solely a function of professional opinion. It may be a standard applied by the audience, on grounds that actors or dramatic critics might not deign to recognize. It will vary with time and context – the prevailing norms of everyday behavior; the traditions of performance; what other actors have done. Where an actor studiously inflects his personal qualities into a portrayal, it is usual to refer to this as ‘personality acting’ or personation. If a strict standard of character acting is applied, personation is not regarded as acting at all but as behaving (Quinn 1990; Knox 1946).

Character portrayal is obviously not a solitary activity, though an actor may behave as though it is. A one-person show depends on the support of backstage (or behind-camera) crafts, to say nothing of the inputs of the director, producer and writers. Once cast, wardrobe and makeup artists assist in altering the actor's features such as hair and skin color, beards, shape of nose, etc., to come close to the specification of a character. This leaves the actor to take care of the business of fitting gestures, voice, posture, to character, sustaining these in performance with other actors required on their part to do the same. But there still remains a choice to emphasize or deemphasize such qualities. How this occurs and in which direction will depend on a range of factors. Most immediate is the actor's understanding of the character, or, at least, the understanding of those directing her or him. Yet analytically, prior to any actual performance, the intensity of the demand for inflection or deflection depends on the fundamental fit between the actor's actual person and a given character. So unless an actor's box-office pull means that he or she plays "himself" or "herself" in character, casting requires as close a physical fit as possible between the actor and what are deemed the appropriate categorical qualities (young, old, tall, short) of the relevant character.

Noting these immediate constraints, my concern here is with the strategy, rather than the tactics, of embodiment: what does a particular approach to the projection of a character imply about the relationship between the actor's being and appearance? For it is in this space that the audience's sense of the actor's real being behind a character's surfaces, and a judgment of the actor's worth – both as fictional and real personality – are formed. This judgment is never a purely technical matter, but is about the moral weight of the actor as a person. In other words, the relationship of the actor to a fictional character tends to be overshadowed by "character" in the moral sense of term – the value of the actor as a representative person. What is fundamentally at stake here is the credibility or "truth" basis of kinds of performance.

Chiefly, there are two aspects to this evaluation: how a given performance structures the relationship between the real or pro-filmic world from which the performance was given; and, how those viewing the performance construe the relationship between the actor's identity and the identity of a dramatic character as written and performed. Put simply, the question here is: what does a particular style of performance imply about the relationship between the actor's private being and seeming in character? Since those viewing performances are effectively a mass – comprised of critics, commentators, reviewers and the general public – the actual process of reception is complex and multilayered. But in principle, the general features of the process can be charted by use of a veridictory square (Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt 2011) (see table 17.1). As the term veridictory implies, the square is a truth table that can be applied to everyday social interaction where it incites judgments of character – of the perceived moral worth of a person.

In dramatic performances, fictional characters have a typical significance as collective symbols representing in public a display of a moral interiority that invites the audience to evaluate its worth, accepting or rejecting it as a particular inflection of

Table 17.1 Modes of being

Self/character relationships		
1 Real	Being	Seeming
2 Illusion	Not being	Seeming
3 Dissimulation	Being	Not seeming
4 False or not pertinent	Not being	Not seeming

personhood (Skeggs and Wood 2012). In drama some examples of the four conditions in table 17.1 are:

- 1 *Real* (A person with an established reputation) playing his or her publicly known self (cameo); or a character with a transparent nom de guerre.
- 2 *Illusion* An actor playing a series of fictional characters (human, nonhuman or animal) substantially different from his or her offstage personality.
- 3 *Dissimulation* A female actor playing a male character or vice versa. There is a long history of creative cross-dressing but contemporary examples in film might include Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis in Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* (1959), Glenn Close as *Albert Nobbs* (2011) or Tyler Perry in the *Madea* series.
- 4 *False or not pertinent* Any performance of a character that does not pass a prevailing threshold of credibility. The actor fails either to seem or to be a character (regularly perceived to be a feature of most of Adam Sandler's movies). This condition may also apply because of a lack of physical fit between the actor and the proposed or established corporeal qualities of a character. Celebrity websites such as Hollywood Gossip have regular photo-essays detailing various gaps between the on-screen persona and offscreen person of stars and celebrities.

Clearly there are variations of fit, and a gradient relationship between inflecting and deflecting the impact of the (given and acquired) qualities of the self upon the being-and-seeming relationship.³ But four identity anchors seem salient:

- a *Person* The conception of the human individual, still prevalent today as the self attuned for presentation in social interaction. When the interrelated terms stardom and celebrity entered common currency in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such a presentation was not judged for its authenticity, that is, as a veridical expression of inner feelings, but for its sincerity: the declaration of a commitment to manipulate the self in order to honor a particular social code (Trilling 1972). Historically the notion of an interior essence, hidden from the self and others, that might be uncovered by a depth analysis did not emerge as a commonplace idea until late in the nineteenth century (Wharman 2004).
- b *Personage* The person, treated as an integral, or indivisible expression of a self, extrapolated or referentially elevated to the level of a collective symbol. A superior embodiment of collective values and a personal allegory of what defines

Table 17.2 Grammar of identity

Span Mode of being	Individual	Transindividual
As self	Person	Personage
As symbol	Persona (fetish) = celebrity	Sociocultural type (totem) = star

(for example) “national character” at its best, the Great Tragedian, the People’s Princess, etc.

- c *Character* A specific instance of the moral quality of being a person as opposed to a thing (Taylor 1991). Character is a fuzzy term because it has an individual and collective referent.⁴ In the individual case its point of reference or mode is the individual outside of, or anterior to, any process of representation. Real persons have moral personalities and character marks this singular focus. Character also has a transindividual dimension, which refers to a fictional or quasi-fictional collective symbol, the representation of a moral personality found in media texts. I mark this collective quality with a Capital C as Character. Nonetheless, in the actual or fictional case, character is the representation of a personal moral quality, natural and acquired.⁵
- d *Persona* The studied coloration of the person of the actor by the virtual qualities of a Character. In a strict sense, the pre-cinematic actor does not have a persona outside of the moment of performance, and this persona is an inflection of the qualities of the character he is immediately playing. The transition of this ur-persona into a persona proper depends on the development of cinema and thereafter the electronic media (Castles 2008). But even here such a shadowy persona can be discerned in the performance of an actor or performer who is not headlined or named or in his or her early career.

In sum, Persona is not a unitary thing but rather a multilayered and multiphased process. The verbal fuzziness or family resemblance found in terms like star, celebrity, icon, idol, etc., is an expression of differing conditions of articulation between the capacities of the self – as person, personage, character, and persona. These identities have a topological significance that derives from their place on an implicit map of representation. Table 17.2 provides such a map.

The development of these modes of identity depends on some prior thresholds. Do the singular entities of person and character attain a level of universal or collective significance (a feature shared by stars and celebrities)? If they attain this then the next threshold depends on the preponderant emphasis given (or attributed) to either their personal or typical qualities. If typical qualities are primary, then the performer navigates a path toward becoming a socially representative being or a personage as a totem. If individual qualities are prioritized, then the performer navigates a path

toward becoming a persona as a fetish. By totem, I mean a sign complex centered on the individual that exemplifies a collective relationship between culture and nature. By fetish I mean a sign complex which seems to exhaust the capacity of social type to the point of being its only example. Finally, a personage can attain an existence outside of any specific character (e.g., Hamlet). A persona only emerges (if at all) from the contingencies of a specific performance and the specific person of the star or celebrity.

The Interposition of Technology

Prior to the advent of photographic (and ultimately cinematographic) means of likeness production, persona remained an endogenous image restricted to the actor's presence and his or her doings before an audience in the theater, or before attendees in some public setting. To simplify somewhat, the "archaic" persona was a product of the actor's technique, aided by stagecraft that deflected or inflected the private qualities, physical or psychological, of the actor's person.

The historical development of acting in the West prioritized an instrumental approach to the body in performance (Roach 1985). Based on a Cartesian split between the mind that commands and the body that does, Western acting was wedded to the ideal of the actor producing an image of a character. This image, whether held to arise from physiognomic recipes for emotionally stimulating external behavior, such as gestures or looks, or from the summoning up of inner emotional states, was primarily conceptualized as an effect of the actor or performer's actions. The impact of transcription technologies – whether in photochemical or, much later, electronic form – on character image production was to create a likeness of the self that became increasingly independent of the presence of the actor and what he or she might achieve by the exercise of self-developed body techniques. This technological capacity to develop a likeness as a separate mode of being and seeming created an actual double. This double – whatever its practical and aesthetic limitations – was a self-sufficient augmented version of the self, separable and, because of the possibility of editing out undesirable real-time occurrences, able to operate as a material professional ego-ideal. This ideal, found in still but especially in motion image production, could be set against the unmediated or, strictly, less externally mediated presence of the actor or performer.⁶

One consequence of this shift from an ur-persona to a persona proper is that the distinction between acting as inflection versus acting as deflection can lose its practical force. The effects visible in the persona proper are no longer under the actor/performer's direct control, and in fact may arise from random and lucky effects produced by interface between a material body and technology.

In these circumstances, the persona becomes an objectified image that by an inversion comes to limit, if not control, the actor's own offscreen behavior. This process of alienation of the image need not be unwelcome. If the skills and talents of a given actor are comparatively limited, the cinematic or digital treatment by contrast can produce a performance better than what is possible by his or her efforts alone.⁷ This is equally likely to be true when the performer is particularly skilled, because the

camera or its digital equivalent can render coups de théâtre that are beyond the physical capacity of a human performer. Nonetheless, some actors may feel this “delegation” of the image to the machine is loss of professional autonomy, and an opening out of the prospect that less skilled or even amateur performers may threaten employment opportunities. But a more fundamental problem is that the technologically enhanced persona undercuts a fundamental premise of stardom: that the star is the exclusive proprietor of the effects and affects produced by his or her performance. The ownership of the finalized image and the idea of a nonfungible or unique contribution is the entire basis of the economic rent that stars are able to secure for their services (Chisholm 1997). So the self-interest of the star, or would-be star, is not likely to be advanced by practicing a kind of image Luddism.⁸ One of the reasons acting is perceived as a realm of freedom – beyond all the perquisites success brings – is that as a performance practice it has the weakest association with objective criteria. A sports star or a ballerina is measured against objective impersonal standards; an actor tends to be measured against subjective criteria.

The Body as a Technology

Three points need to be made in respect of the relationship between technology and the body. The first is that the relationship is not a simple instrumental interaction between a free intentional agent, bent on manipulating his or her body to create a favorable impression in others. Such voluntarism ignores the fact that the body is already deeply implicated as predisposing framework for perception, both self-perception and perception of the self by others (Crossley 1995). Second, given this primordial existential framing, the mind is not free to direct the body to be any kind of sign. This is because its actual physical composition (tall, short, fat, thin, old, young, male, female, white, brown, etc.) limits what it can signify primordially in the specific cultural and social framings in which it has been socialized – producing what Bourdieu has termed a *habitus* and Merleau-Ponty *habits* (1994: 142–3). Third, and most decisive in the present context, existing technology is the outcome of prior decisions about which of its potentialities, if developed, are likely to garner the greatest profits in pursuit of a desirable producer–consumer interface (Williams 2003). So the tendency to view technology as an instrument outside of content – as in McLuhan’s claim that the medium is the “message” – misses the point that the content of the medium is oriented to evoke in others a certain set of desirable, hence potentially marketable, connotations. Signs do not create meaning. Rather they offer the potential for intersubjective experience through which meaning can (or cannot) be created (Merleau-Ponty 1994: 182–3).

In considering stardom or celebrity, these principles need to be adjusted to the fact that we are addressing not social exchange in general, but social exchange occurring through the production of performance commodities, which entails a very specific set of sociological and economic constraints. The most elementary of these is that in the construction of a persona, ordinary people lack the training and skills available to stars and celebrities and are likely to lack the indulgence of an aura provided by

a market-proven success. They are mundane and have no transpersonal prestige as already famous. Another dimension that marks off a “professional” from a mundane persona is that a celebrity or star has the legal capacity to own and protect his or her persona from collective appropriation, even if that persona has been built on collective resources. Celebrity publicity rights protect the star or celebrity’s capacity to profit exclusively from marketing his or her persona as a brand (Radin 1982).

These conditions imply that the star or celebrity’s person is part of a commodification process that is anterior to the point of performance. Generally products do not become commodities until they are recognized by the market. Pending this recognition they have use value but not exchange value. In standard commodities, the direct producers disappear from the goods provided. The performance commodity rests on the same process of market recognition, but as personal service; the direct producer does not disappear behind the goods provided.⁹ The product and the body through which it was produced are co-present at the point of exchange—obvious enough in the case of a live performance, but also in the case where the performance is mediated. Rehearsals and postproduction editing mark a delay between production and entry into the market, to be sure. But although this may prove misguided, the performance of the star is developed as though he or she were before an audience or an internal market. Conversely, the fact that the audience pays in advance does not alter the fundamental fact that the body of the star is the site where exchange value is (or is promised to be) realized. This does not necessarily mean that the star or celebrity is immediately a fetish, but there is a strong potential for this to happen.

In the case of live performance, and even more so in the case of the recorded performance which creates an externalized image, the actor has practical livelihood interests in maintaining ownership of his or her likeness. This concern extends as far as possible to how he or she looks offscreen, since this will demonstrate that his or her value is anterior to any performance as its source. The current priority given to the well-defined body and cosmetically maintained or surgically enhanced appearance can be considered as an assertion of ownership of “persona” effects and affects.¹⁰ If this is accomplished – and the persistence of a star or celebrity system in an increasingly collaborative form of production indicates that it is – the single most important transition effected by commodification is to convert the objectification of acting labor, accomplished by transcription technology, into a process of self-ownership. This process is about alienation in two senses. First, since the star’s appearance is always artificially enhanced – the directly observed body cannot match the technologically enhanced body – the vogue for cosmetic surgery can be seen as an attempt to adjust this visual deficit. This displacement of the action of the performer onto the action of the machine is one aspect of alienation. Second, there is another, more substantial process of alienation that manifests itself in the social relations of inequality between those above and below the line in the film or television production industry.

To make this clear, it is useful to consider a distinction made by Martin Heidegger in his treatment of technology. The first aspect relates to his well-known view of technology as a world picture. In this “picture” (perhaps better described as an ideology) the stuff of the natural world, including human beings, is considered not valuable in itself but as standing in reserve as resources to be exploited. The second aspect

relates to technology as an accumulation of collective intelligence or expertise, which present work appropriates; so against the exploitation of nature can be set another potential for expropriation through which present work benefits from the collective activity of past and contemporary labor. This second aspect of standing in reserve concerns the relationship between the collective and the individual who works, rather than the general relationship between humanity and nature. This occurs when the collective “worker” is not, or is insufficiently, acknowledged as a source of value. In the case of capitalist relations of film production, standing in reserve will take the form of the privatization of collective resources. A primary example of standing in reserve for capital is the star system; as is, with certain qualifications, the celebrity system.¹¹ As persona is formed as a commodity, the use-values produced by the filmmaking collective are appropriated as a personal commodity or individualized exchange value. In Marxian theory, this process of appropriation is represented by the concept of capital fetishism – the perception that the entrepreneur is the singular demiurge through which exchange value is formed (King 2010). Under a capitalist system of film production (but this also applies to other art forms, e.g. theater, musicals, exhibitions) the notion of a capital fetish has an empirical reality – films will not get made and will not be invested in unless (thereafter only if) a particular star is placed under contract.¹² Again the star or celebrity – even if she or he is not a box office success – ensures the employment of the production crew. But where success is gained or the star remuneration is fixed in advance, the share to the collective remains unchanged. In these circumstances, the persona functions like a fixed asset which attracts economic rent and thereby exploits the collective labor of others for self-advantage.

Person, personage and character (as an actual or fictive personality) are inflections of types ranging from average in the case of person through to a prototype – the definitive representation of a type – as a personage (Rosch 1973). A fetish, by contrast, is a self-sufficient particular that appropriates popular symbolic capital in order to present collectively resonant qualities as personal attributes. The fetish represents the power of the collective as the qualities of an individual endorsed by market forces or the box office, record sales, etc. The force of commodification is to collapse the representational dimensions of person, personage and character into the individual gravitational field of persona: a black hole, so to speak, of abstraction from collective realities.

It is in the zone of persona that the abstraction from the universal to the singular is made concrete. Yet there is a distinction to be made in terms of the repleteness and intensity of the abstraction. Historically, the star (in cinema, theater and music) retains the greatest degree of representativeness because his or her persona remains implicated in a relationship of standing for a collective process. The celebrity, by contrast, is constructed through presentational techniques and technologies that are by definition self-centered (Marshall 2010). Since we are dealing with processes, the line between the star and celebrity is not firm, as attested by any viewing of American television commercials where stars use their names detached, or at a distance, from a specified persona (sometimes with jarring results, e.g. “badass” Samuel L. Jackson pitching for the Capital One credit card). But setting aside subtle variations

in the careers of particular stars and celebrities, stars tend toward a totemic status and celebrities toward fetishism. Put bluntly, it is ethically meaningful to claim, even if this is ultimately not within his power of decision, that Samuel L. Jackson is selling out. But to claim Paris Hilton is doing the same seems beside the point – she *is* the pitch. This is because Jackson is (or is expected to be) a totem and she is a fetish.¹³

What is important is not so much what individual stars or celebrities intend, but what is dictated by their circumstances in terms of earning opportunities.¹⁴ The most powerful determinant of the latter is the market – that great register of undifferentiated popular approval – which favors fetishism, or standing as, rather than standing for. Whether a particular individual is acting as a star representing some collective experience or as a celebrity demonstrating his or her unique creativity and popularity, or some mixture of both, is the key issue. So to give a more anodyne example, Katy Perry can be interpreted as modulating between both positions. For example, her video of the making of “Firework” can be considered as a sincere effort to give disempowered Czech youth a cathartic moment of self-expression as extras, or as a calculated appropriation of their energies. Or both. The Czech extras visually rendered by CGI as releasing the fireworks of their inner spirits and heart presumably return to the realm of nontranscendence, perhaps to dine out and regale others with tales of their near-encounter with Katy. But for Katy, the erstwhile and glamorous vicar of their passions, transcendence is not of the moment but a feature of a professional career and a business plan. Nor is she alone in performing the charisma of a shaman or archetypal manager of emotional release (Orzechowicz 2008).

A Perfusion of Avatars

In recent times, the concept of a persona has seized the popular imagination. As has been observed, a pervasive theme in contemporary popular culture is that the unwatched life is not worth living (Gamson 2011). Watched lives demand the performance of persona and personas depend on technologies of image production.¹⁵ So one important factor is clearly technological: the rapid diffusion and cheapening of the means of self-presentation, particularly as enabled by mobile apps and by social media in general. Such technologies afford opportunities for self-expression that are cheap and easy to use. But they are far from providing the kinds of expressive opportunities that high-end professional and commercial production offers stars and celebrities (and in some cases, e.g. Auto-Tune, supplies a level of talent that the “bare” star or celebrity does not possess). So some individuals are more expressively empowered than others, suggesting a further dimension to social inequalities. This dimension acknowledged, it is nonetheless the case that the new media have expanded the possibilities of publicly representing the self: on social media sites, in blogs, through social relationship apps such as Instagram and Twitter. Such developments are less democratic than they appear, as I suggest below. But first, it is worth pointing out that the digital media have increased the range of personas



Figure 17.1 Mixed reality continuum

as mixed reality performances. The extension of the continuum of representation now includes both real objects and virtual objects (see figure 17.1), including images of persons – the material of persona construction (Miligram and Kishino 1994; Benford and Giannachi 2011: 3).

In terms of stars and celebrities, the notion of a real image outside of mediation is either a contradiction in terms or merely a logical possibility since stars and celebrities are always part of an augmented reality. Ordinary people as objects, rather than agents of representation, provide the limit case of the real as a source of likenesses. A star or celebrity may claim authenticity. But outside of major public meltdowns of the Mel Gibson variety, his or her professional persona is an expression of augmented reality. Moreover, if stars and celebrities have personas based on an augmented reality, there are degrees and modes of augmentation. What is decisive is that some signifying elements – voice, bearing, parts of the features – remain part of what is visualized and rendered as an image. A strong example of augmentation would be Ron Perlman as the character Hellboy when aspects of his cinematic look are exaggerated rather than totally obliterated by makeup and prostheses.

At the virtuality end of the continuum, personas would be constructed solely from the internal resources of video, animation and digital animation. Here one encounters Idoru or media-created stars such as Lara Croft, Aki Ross or more recently, Hatsune Miku, the lead singer of a 49-strong “real” girl band who actually is actually a hologram.¹⁶ But since even Hatsune Miku is constructed out of captured images of her sister performers and voiced by a well-known voice performer, it is probably more accurate to refer to her less as pure virtuality than as a persona that visually suppresses any real-time source of imagery through the creation of code. Where virtuality of a persona is a product of computer animation and motion capture, the fan’s involvement in Cosplay – costumed role play – and real-time fan behavior towards a simulated presence is an attempt to return the persona to the realm of the real.

In augmented virtuality, such as Andy Serkis as Gollum in the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, the actor/performer is not visible and the avatar has exclusive occupation and agency with the narrative (King 2011). There also appears to be a hybrid variant that mixes augmented reality and augmented virtuality in a single dramatic space, such as Robert Downey Jr switching from the human character of Tony Stark to the nonhuman character of Iron Man and back.

Such shifts in the visual grammar of character obviously pose complex issues of identity – such as whether robots can be regarded as moral agents (Sullins 2006). But my immediate concern in introducing the reality–virtuality continuum is to suggest that technological shifts are providing the ground for new forms of persona.

The first of these, now very pervasive, is the prescribed persona. When the path of analysis descends below the realm of augmented performances occupied by stars and celebrities, to the mundane uses of persona in getting or keeping a job, the image

of technologically sustained freedom of expression, creativity and the like dissipates. Persona becomes a feature not just of performance work but of work in general, in service employment or not. Here persona is fundamentally prescribed and remains generic and external – or even unmarked – as against forms of work that permit, within certain task-related limits and layers of demand intensity, a degree of self-expression. This distinction applies not only to performance work specifically, but to service work in general, as indicated in the distinction between highly scripted service work (McJobs) and jobs that intensively demand skills and motivated team play (iMacjobs) (King 2010). There are, again, personas that are highly prescribed and imposed by formal authorities such as the police or security agencies – criminals, delinquents, deviants, terrorists – and those imposed by informal groups, such as one's family or peers. Again, as the concept of performativity suggests, the voluntary assumption of a persona, under a strategy of passing, creates another kind of persona, which hides the “performer” behind a mask, the better to effect a critique of prevailing norms by means of extravagant conformity, or at least shelter the self from censure for nonconformity. The superconformity strategy is particularly relevant for media stars and celebrities who command the resources of the media to construct extravagant personas. But this is a strictly sequestered phenomenon and advisedly so. Fans of Miley Cyrus are advised not to twerk on the streets without minders and bodyguards.

Finally there are meme-personas, those exclusively textually based beings not directly derived from a “live” body, which derive their connotations from the action of fans and consumers to deploy them as a collective identifier. Meme-personas differ according to the technical basis of their production. There are those whose origins are textual, such the V (or Guido Fawkes) mask from the movie *V for Vendetta*, which has been repurposed as a deidentifying signifier for collective protests such as Occupy Wall Street, ironically producing substantial revenue for manufacturers and Warner Bros (Waites 2011). Then there are meme-personas that construct intertextual images out of technological processes, having no linear mimetic relationship to human performances because they repurpose elements of several performances, both past and present. Meme-personas that appear to have an original “human” source are technological effects constructed through digital animation and various strategies of motion capture. Meme-personas suggest a posthuman future for celebrity where the embedding of performance is no longer in an identifiable individual but in a private data bank of sounds and images.

The Big Fix

Such identity shifts confirm that persona is a complex phenomenon, involving different moments, articulations, and tactics of appropriation and expropriation. Above all the impact of technology, its form and content, cannot finally be disentangled from a process of commodity-becoming. It is useful to consider the different sites of persona as suggesting a moral economy of pretending. In such an economy, as in Thompson's original formulation, the rights of producers and consumers, buyers and sellers and

moral and cultural advocates play out in clashes of rights and entitlements (1991: 185–258).

In the cultural sphere subtended by Global Hollywood, the actor or performer's mode of appearance depends on contractual relationships, casting decisions and genre popularity, all of which govern access to costly and high-end technologies. One of the hoped-for benefits of social media is that they will permit everyone to craft their own public image. But it is not the capacity of a low-tech DIY app to craft an image but the value of what is crafted that counts. A celebrity selfie can be technically poor because the celebrity has a market-consecrated persona and can afford, at least some of the time, to look disheveled in an evocation of greater intimacy. Ordinary selfies do not evade the larger logic of the celebrity system – indeed they have the “double whammy” of being not just *of* a celebrity but also of not being *made by* him or her (Franco 2013).

Once it was the presence of the star or celebrity in professionally crafted images that inscribed distinction. Now it is the star or celebrity's sheer presence that determines value, much like the toenail of a long-departed saint speaks to the charisma of the total body. But the method of sanctification, which bends the affordance offered by a technology, is much more mundane: it is the reproduction of the celebrity's fetish value overriding the star's value as a representation. In this manner, the economy of pretending, with its rich imaginative possibilities, is freeze-dried and subsumed by the exchange value of merely being.¹⁷

Notes

- 1 In English, the urtext for considering the relationship between persons and representations of persons is Hobbes's chapter XVI, “Persons, authors and things personated,” in *Leviathan* (1651) (Hobbes 1928).
- 2 John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) had already draw out the pragmatic aspects of the new theory of identity (Locke 1996).
- 3 I exclude the term personality because it is a quality and substance that each of these “positions” possesses in some degree and in some modality.
- 4 Some of the charisma of stars and celebrities derives from this potential for a dual realm of reference.
- 5 The actual person of a star or celebrity may or may not have the qualities ascribed to him or her, and certainly not with the level of definitiveness implied by a realist view of their person or personage.
- 6 This is a process of variation between persona as an endogenous projection of identity based on technique and persona as technologically mediated projection that is exogenous to the person of the actor and anticipates the synthespian an actor not connected, or with only a vestigial connection, to an actual body.
- 7 It is true that the cinematic image adds an imposing scale to the actor's image anyway.
- 8 Though the interests of the profession as a whole might be. In other words, the acceptance by the star of some reliance on technological produced effects becomes a means of producing an image or likeness monopoly, shored up by legally binding agreements.

- 9 Strictly speaking, most but not all of the direct producers disappear. Above-the-line employees producers, writers, directors and stars are marked presences in relation to the film commodity.
- 10 In what follows I am indebted to Wendling (2011), especially pp. 52ff.
- 11 Other roles director or producer can be seen as further gradations of personal expropriation making James Cameron a veritable Anti-Lockean hero who appropriates and admixes the admixtures of multiples of labor power.
- 12 For purposes of simplification I set aside developments such as the long tail and 360-degree marketing.
- 13 It is necessary to emphasize that whether a star or celebrity is a totem or a fetish is not an either/or matter; it can be either/and. Thus Marilyn Monroe as the absolute Hollywood Blonde is a fetish and, as symbol of patriarchal exploitation, a totem of gender relationships. Indeed it is plausible to argue that she is an “ultimate” superstar because she is a circulating condensation of both kinds of subject.
- 14 This does not prevent speculation on motives which is after all the mainstay of celebrity websites such as Hollywood Gossip.
- 15 Texts are a form of technology but not one I consider here given my focus on the generation of performances. For a discussion of serials and seriality as an engine for the elaboration and diffusion of personas, see Marshall (2014).
- 16 See <http://www.crypton.co.jp/vocaloid> (accessed Apr. 2015). Interestingly enough the arch-protean performer, Lady Gaga, has used Hatsune Miku in her ArtPop roadshow: To differentiate the real thing from the fake? Or to flaunt her Warholian sensibility?
- 17 Cf. “I used to go out and people would tell me I looked like a freak. Now I go out and people tell me I look like Lady Gaga. If you’re dressing to stand out, you don’t want to be told you’re just one of the crowd” (Colman 2010).

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You May Know Me from YouTube

(Micro-)Celebrity in Social Media

Alice E. Marwick

While fame has existed for centuries, *celebrity* is inextricably linked to media. The peculiar mixture of larger-than-life personas and the feelings of connection and intimacy they inspire are formed and spread through mass media (Rojek 2001). Thus, as media changes, so does celebrity. In the last two decades, we have seen dramatic changes in the concept of celebrity from one related solely to mass and broadcast media to one that reflects a more diverse media landscape; for instance, reality television has both revealed the mundane day-to-day lives of pop stars and sitcom actors and simultaneously transformed ordinary people into celebrities (Kavka 2012). More recently, media technologies like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vine, and Instagram have enabled both famous and nonfamous people to generate vast quantities of personal media, manipulate and distribute this content widely, and reach out to (real or imagined) audiences.

The contemporary shift from broadcast to participatory media, and the popularity of social media technologies among young people, have contributed to two major changes in celebrity culture. First, “traditional” celebrities have embraced social media to create direct, unmediated relationships with fans, or at least the illusion of such. Seeming to bypass the traditional brokers of celebrity attention like agents and managers, young stars like Lady Gaga and Kim Kardashian provide snapshots of their lives and interactions with followers that give the impression of candid, unfettered access. Social media transform interactions with celebrities that feel interpersonal, such as watching a concert, into interpersonal mediated interaction, such as receiving a Twitter @reply from a pop star (Marwick and boyd 2011b). Such interactions can be very powerful for devoted fans, further increasing the emotional ties between a celebrity and his or her audience.

Second, social media enable *micro-celebrity*, a self-presentation technique in which people view themselves as a public persona to be consumed by others, use strategic intimacy to appeal to followers, and regard their audience as fans

(Marwick and boyd 2011a; Senft 2008; 2013). The micro-celebrity practitioner may have a very small number of followers, but is able to inhabit the celebrity subject position through the use of the same social technologies used by musicians, athletes, and actors. Such micro-celebrities might include fashion or food bloggers; activists; Vine comedians with millions of views; or simply Twitter users who treat their followers like valued fans. Notably, micro-celebrity practice differs depending on the social context in which the practitioner is located and the technological affordances of the application. Technical affordances are the material functionalities of a technology which allow users to perform certain actions (Norman 2002). In Instagram, for instance, which affords users the ability to upload mobile photos and comment on them, micro-celebrities are often conventionally good-looking or people who display status symbols like luxury goods, due to the app's focus on visuals (Marwick 2013a). At the same time, subcultural or niche celebrities like Miranda Sings, a YouTube star with hundreds of thousands of followers, are able to use social media to amass enough fans to support themselves through their online creative activities while remaining unknown to most and ignored by mainstream media.

In this chapter, I use examples from a range of popular social media technologies to analyze how the particular technical features of social media applications, combined with the prevalence of celebrity-focused mass culture, enable individuals to inhabit a popular subjectivity that resembles, even if vaguely, that of the “conventionally” famous. These shifts have created a new definition of celebrity as a set of practices and self-presentation techniques that spread across social networks as they are learned from other individuals. In these contexts, celebrity becomes something a person does, rather than something a person is, and exists as a continuum rather than a binary quality. “Celebrity” in the social media age is a range of techniques and strategies that can be performed by anyone with a mobile device, tablet, or laptop.

Celebrification, Celebritization, and Media

The desire for attention is entirely human, and the use of various attention-getting techniques has a long lineage. While Richard Schickel famously argued that “there was no such thing as celebrity until the beginning of the twentieth century” (2000), historians and media scholars have shown that celebrity and fame have coexisted for centuries (Barry 2008). Many historically significant people used what might be considered early mass media, such as literature, monuments, or portraiture, to strategically solidify their elevated social status. Alexander the Great, for instance, famously cultivated an image of himself as a god and heir to an immortal throne, and hired historians, bards, and poets to spread this myth throughout his empire (Braudy 1986: 4). The advent of mass media gave rise to new forms of celebrity. The burgeoning print culture of the early nineteenth century produced arguably the first print star, Lord Byron, whose romantic exploits, passionate poetry, and handsome face were widely disseminated, creating a “brand” consumed by an international female audience and fueling what Byron's wife called “Byromania” (McDayter 2009). The popularity of film and radio in the early twentieth century demanded constantly

updated content, which increased in turn the “names, faces and voices” featured in the media, increasing the number of well-known people (Boorstin 1961: xxxiv). These famous people fueled the popular appetite for theater, radio, and motion pictures, and served as common reference points for a large, diverse, and increasingly urban immigrant population (Henderson 2005). As broadcasting fragmented and multiplied, so did the images and voices of radio, film, television, music, and sports stars.

In the contemporary United States and Britain, celebrity has become a broader phenomenon in which image, spectacle, and drama are expected in social spheres beyond entertainment, such as business and politics (Guthey et al. 2009; Street 2004). In part, this is due to the *mediatization* of culture; as Frederick Krotz explains, mediatization is the process by which “media in the long run increasingly become relevant for the social construction of everyday life, society, and culture as a whole” (2009). This is distinct from *mediation*, which refers more generally to communication through media technology (Lundby 2009). Mediatization suggests that even the most intimate dimensions of life, such as individual subjectivity and interpersonal relations, are being actively reshaped and infiltrated by the media (Livingstone 2009).

In examining the increasingly prominent place of celebrities in mass culture, scholars have used the terms “celebritization” and “celebrification,” often, and confusingly, interchangeably. Following the distinction between mediatization and mediation, Olivier Driessens proposes that *celebritization* be used to refer to the “societal and cultural changes implied by celebrity” whereas *celebrification* is the process by which individuals are transformed into celebrities (2013: 642). However, much as “mediatization” is criticized for postulating a linear timeline from pre-media to mediatized society, and for presuming a singular media logic which doggedly infiltrates every sphere of life (Couldry 2008), this distinction may be a bit simplistic. To Driessens, celebritization describes not only the ways in which social and cultural life is transformed by celebrity, but also contemporary changes in celebrity, primarily diversification, democratization, and migration. Diversification is the increased importance of celebrity status outside of entertainment and sports, while migration refers to the ability of celebrities famous in one realm to migrate to another: the wrestler Jesse Ventura, for example, becoming governor of Minnesota, or former child star Soleil Moon Frye finding success as a mommy blogger and new media entrepreneur. Democratization, however, incorporates elements of celebrification, and is crucial to understanding micro-celebrity.

What Evans calls the “populist democracy” position (2005: 14), and what Graeme Turner refers to as the “demotic turn” (2004: 82; 2006), maintains that reality television and the internet have created new types of celebrities who are average Joes rather than remarkable stars. As Joshua Gamson explains, “Celebrity culture is increasingly populated by unexceptional people who have become famous and by stars who have been made ordinary” (2011: 1062). Misha Kavka argues that reality television has both elevated individuals to celebrity status and revealed the “regular people” behind celebrity personas, the former through programs like *Big Brother* and *American Idol*, and the latter through “celebreality” shows like *The Osbournes* and

Dancing with the Stars (2012: 146–7). Turner deliberately distinguishes between “democratic” and “demotic” to argue against the notion that the media apparatus has opened to ordinary citizens. Instead, the demotic turn is an increased *appearance* of participation – which may include more spaces for people of color, queer people, and so forth – tightly circumscribed within a hierarchical media system. Television networks find it increasingly worthwhile to “grow their own” celebrities to leverage across properties, such as the *Real Housewives* and their attendant spinoffs, but only to serve the best interests of the corporation (Turner 2006).

In part, this is due to the fragmentation of network television into many channels of narrowcast niche media, bringing to light people formerly known only to particular subcultures, and creating “stars” of chefs, drag queens, hairstylists, long-haul truckers, and pawn-shop owners.¹ However artificial the “reality” in reality television, it has indubitably expanded the field of the famous, with many reality stars becoming permanent fixtures on tabloid covers and others achieving widespread recognition even if they fall outside of mainstream celebrity aesthetics. The stars of *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* and *Duck Dynasty*, for instance, are working-class American southerners. While their class status is exploited on these shows as a matter of exotic difference, their media access provides them with the ability to command enormous attention. When *Duck Dynasty* star Phil Robertson gave an interview to *GQ* magazine condemning gays and lesbians as sinful and compared their activities to bestiality, a media furor broke out (Magary 2014). While Robertson’s comments were initially condemned by A&E, the network that airs *Duck Dynasty*, religious groups and prominent conservatives like Sarah Palin and Bobby Jindal spoke out in support and the show remained on the air (Carter 2013). While conservative religious beliefs like Robertson’s are rarely aired on reality television, they are shared by millions of Americans – so in one sense, *Duck Dynasty* gave Robertson a platform for his political beliefs that he would otherwise not have had.

Another aspect of democratization is the incorporation of elements of celebrity into individual subjectivity and self-presentation, which some scholars of celebrity mark as part of *celebrification*. The impact of celebrity culture, and marketing/advertising culture more widely, on individual self-presentation has been theorized in various disciplines as promotional culture (Wernick 1991), presentational culture (Marshall 2010), the specularization of the self (Hearn 2006), and personification (Sternberg 1998). Andrew Wernick argues that “promotional culture,” which includes publicizing people, ideas, and organizations through marketing, public relations, branding, and lobbying, has become the predominant modern paradigm (1991). Although he focuses on these processes within the media industries, his larger point is the expansion of commodification into aspects of social life, including subjectivity. Ernest Sternberg focuses on one such expansion, how modern workers draw from celebrities to model “personas” in the workplace which performatively convey human virtue (1998). This model, which he refers to as “phantasmagoric labor,” is used by Alison Hearn to describe the “specularization of the self,” or how prospective reality television contestants consciously present themselves as personas, or “personal brands,” to fit into preexisting media tropes (2006). These theories present a clear overlap between self-commodification and celebrity, as the

celebrity is the personification of person-as-brand. David Marshall proposes that the celebrity remains a model for self-conscious online performance, and suggests that many of these processes be grouped under the label “persona studies” (2010; 2014). I suggest that the model of *micro-celebrity* in internet studies might help us further understand these shifts and changes in the relationship between celebrity and society outside the landscape of television and film.

Micro-Celebrity

Terri Senft, in her book *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*, coined the term micro-celebrity, which she defined as “a new style of online performance in which people employ webcams, video, audio, blogs, and social networking sites to ‘amp up’ their popularity among readers, viewers, and those to whom they are linked online” (2008: 25). Micro-celebrity can be further understood as a mindset and set of practices in which the audience is constructed as a fan base, popularity is maintained through ongoing fan management, and self-presentation is carefully assembled to be consumed by others (Marwick and boyd 2011a; Marwick 2013b; Senft 2013). Micro-celebrity, in other words, is something one *does*, rather than something one *is*. It typically involves self-conscious, carefully constructed personas, which may be primarily textual, visual, or in video, leveraged for instance through a personal blog, set of Instagram selfies, or collection of YouTube videos. Micro-celebrity practitioners see their audience as fans rather than friends or family, and share information strategically with this audience to boost their popularity and attention within a network. Internet studies scholars have used this conceptualization of micro-celebrity as a practice to understand Twitter users (Page 2012), online activists (Tufekci 2013), “porn stars” (Attwood 2007), and citizen–government relations (Pearce 2014).

Related, but distinct, from micro-celebrity is the idea of the subcultural or local celebrity (Hills 2004; Chin and Hills 2008; Ferris 2010). Matt Hills defines subcultural celebrities as “mediated figures who are famous only by and for their fan audiences” (2004: 60), rather than the ubiquitous recognition usually presumed by the term “celebrity.” Hills and his collaborators have examined subcultural celebrities, including actors on cult television shows (Hills and Williams 2005) and television producers like Joss Whedon (Chin and Hills 2008), finding that they may engage in direct audience interaction, such as blogging or making personal appearances at conventions. In other words, rather than viewing the celebrity from afar through a mediated lens, fans may encounter subcultural celebrities through “subcultural, social knowledge and repeated personal contact as well as or rather than emerging through common cultural currency and mediated distance” (Hills 2004: 60). Kerry O. Ferris suggests that this concept could also be applied to local celebrities like “newscasters, politicians, and professors, as well as the lifeguard at the pool, the cashier at the market, and the waitress at the diner – people who are seen, recognized and followed by more people than they can keep track of, and who hence experience relational dynamics similar to those of global, mass cultural celebrities” (2010: 393).

While research suggests that subcultural celebrities, like micro-celebrity practitioners, may have personal contact with their fans, use social media, and command relatively small audiences, micro-celebrity and subcultural celebrity are distinct. First, micro-celebrity is a set of practices and a way of thinking about the self, influenced by the infiltration of celebrity and branding rhetoric into day-to-day life, rather than a personal quality (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s James Marsters may be a subcultural celebrity, but he may not practice micro-celebrity). Second, the process of using social media for audience development and outreach distinguishes micro-celebrity practitioners from their subcultural counterparts. Much of contemporary social media coaxes users to compete for attention and status, encouraging self-promotion in a variety of ways, including micro-celebrity (Marwick 2013b). While the subcultural celebrities discussed by Hills have their origin in broadcast media, micro-celebrity practitioners have fame that is native to social media, such as the YouTube star or highly followed Twitter user, and exist within many interest groups and subcultures besides cult and genre fandom. Despite this, there are overlaps. Micro-celebrity practitioners surely do experience the relational dynamics described by Ferris in her essay on local celebrity. Like subcultural celebrities, they often have smaller audiences (although it is important to note that one can inhabit the mindset of micro-celebrity regardless of the number of people paying attention). But micro-celebrity is not simply a smaller, scaled-down version of celebrity: it is a set of practices drawn from celebrity culture that "regular people" use in daily life to boost their online attention and popularity.

In fact, micro-celebrity is the latest development in a lengthy process of understanding how people make meaning out of media. People who enjoy consuming celebrity culture have often been pathologized, portrayed as miserable or lonely, or viewed as cultural dupes (Jenson 1992). The "active audience" paradigm of media studies attempted to counter this view through studies of how people interpret media products differently and make meaning and use of them in their own lives (Radway 1984). Extending this active interpretation into the productive activities of organized fandom, scholars began to investigate how fannish activity could build community and enable creative activity (Baym 2000), accelerated by the internet. This shift from *consumption* to *participation* has been widely discussed. Henry Jenkins coined the term "participatory culture" in his ethnographic study *Textual Poachers* to describe how people draw from media texts to create and produce their own cultural products (1992). While fans use cultural raw materials to create content about media properties like *Doctor Who* or *Star Trek*, micro-celebrity practitioners turn the fannish discourse on its head to create content about themselves. As Kim Allen states in her ethnography of aspiring singers and actors, "No longer 'private consumers,' 'teenyboppers' or 'groupies,' idealizing (male) singers and musicians, the young women in this study were quite literally taking center stage as performers themselves" (2011). The often-criticized fan subject is replaced by people creating and producing blogs, selfies, web videos, photographs, short films, music, fiction, and so forth, shifting the relationship from media consumption to production. The new media technologies that enable participatory culture – mobile apps, video-editing software, blogs,

digital cameras, GarageBand – similarly facilitate personal content creation and dissemination.

Through the following case studies, I examine micro-celebrity as a self-presentation technique. Mollysoda is a homegrown Tumblr celebrity, whose predilection for shock and sensationalism is boosted by her postfeminist ethos. Miranda Sings is a character popular on YouTube who responds to “haters” while knowingly winking at her over-the-top satire. Each woman engages in performative acts of self-construction and self-promotion with the goal of maintaining and increasing her audience, but the technological affordances of her chosen platform and the social context in which her performance exists affects how she practices celebrity. Specifically, these case studies illuminate some of the core components of micro-celebrity practice outlined in this essay, namely the relationship between attention and micro-celebrity, and the differences between micro-celebrity practitioners and both mass and subcultural celebrity.

Tumblr: Mollysoda

Tumblr is a quick blogging platform used most frequently for posting images, memes, and macros. It is very popular with teens and young adults and boasts 110 million users (Kafka 2013). Mollysoda, a 20-something digital artist sporting thick eyebrows, winged eyeliner, candy-colored hair and an eyebrow ring, is one of the stars of the platform; she has 30,000 followers and in 2013 sold one of her webcam videos at an art auction for \$1,500 (Osberg 2013). She epitomizes a certain kind of pixelated aesthetic which mixes punk rock, pornography, feminism, 1990s internet culture, and lolcats in equal measure. (Her website, replete with gifs of dancing Second Life avatars, crashed my web browser.) In an essay for art magazine *Hyperallergic*, Alicia Eler and Kate Durbin coined the term “teen-girl Tumblr aesthetic” to describe the endless scrolling stream of animated glittery gifs, photos of naked girls annotated with slang terms, selfies, and pictures of childhood icons that appear on many popular Tumblrs, including Mollysoda. They write:

In the case of these teen girls, their own bodies are canvases upon which they interface with the world, an audience with a gaze that is constantly watching and appraising ... There is still plenty of nostalgia present in the teen-girl Tumblr aesthetic – for example, references to Japanese kawaii culture and ‘90s nostalgia – but there is a darker edge, an undermining of the heterosexual male gaze, as well as an ever-present extreme vulnerability. (Eler and Durbin 2013)

Tumblr enables users to “reblog” images or posts they find interesting; the teen-girl Tumblr aesthetic consists of carefully curated streams of images that, taken together, project an image of the curator as simultaneously empowered and objectified.

Most research on self-presentation and blogging has assumed that blogs are primarily textual or that the images are produced by the blogger, such as fashion bloggers, who photograph themselves (Trammell and Keshelashvili 2005; Schmidt

2007; Mazur and Kozarian 2010). (This shift is at least partially due to the changing functions of blogging software like Blogger and WordPress, which originally focused on text but now allow for many other forms of digital content.) On Tumblr, the vast majority of images are unattributed and found elsewhere, whether they be scanned magazine ads from the 1990s or animated gifs. Mollysoda, however, posts endless numbers of her own videos, selfies, and animated gifs. She considers herself a blogger and artist; in addition to selling her famous “Inbox Full” video in which she read out loud, for ten consecutive hours, all the messages she had received via Tumblr, she writes zines and created a set of animated gifs for the 2012 MTV Video Music Awards (O. Horton 2013).

As an exemplar of the teen-girl Tumblr aesthetic, Mollysoda is often viewed with curiosity; if she’s just posting videos on YouTube and gifs on Tumblr, why is she so popular? Digital strategist Luna Vega wrote in a blog post:

She personifies the modern model of Internet fame and what’s so interesting about her is that exactly what she does or what she’s famous for isn’t always easy to discern. She’s an artist, a filmmaker, and a lot of what she does online (and basically what a lot of Internet famous people do online) is kind of just hanging out while posting media on her Tumblr and videos to her YouTube and Vimeo. For a lot people and especially those who are unfamiliar with Internet culture the distinction of what makes Molly Soda interesting vs. her thousands of similar counterparts is exactly what makes Internet fame so intangible and simultaneously sought after. (Vega 2011)

Mollysoda spoke about this during an interview:

Q. How do you feel about the idea of how easy and common it is for people to become so known online for not really “doing anything”? Do you see this as any different from how mainstream culture idolizes people like Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton for no reason? Do you think there’s validity to this fame?

A. I hate that. I hate it when someone asks me what I “do,” like your job is supposed to define you or something. I’m doing me, you’re doing you, some people are better at getting attention for it than others. There’s no shame in that. (Abascal 2013)

Molly explains that her talent lies in getting attention for “doing me,” or in performing a version of herself that can easily be consumed by an audience. Perhaps the attention she gets can be linked to her instantly recognizable appearance, which has made her into a style icon for younger girls; her penchant for revealing personal details about her insecurities and romantic entanglements; or her creation of original content that can be appropriated and used by others. She steadfastly refuses to pin down either her popularity or her purpose. When asked by a reader “What’s does your art stand for? What are you trying to say with your art? What is your art form?” she responds “hahaha calm down.” Asked in an interview what she thought of the art world, she retorted “I’m pretty sure you don’t have to answer this question after you’ve graduated from art school, right?” Perhaps Mollysoda’s appeal is simply inef-fable. Therein lies one of the contradictions of micro-celebrity which makes it difficult for many to understand: while thousands of people practice the components of

micro-celebrity – creating an easily consumable persona, responding directly to readers, and sharing personal information to enhance emotional ties with fans – these alone do not guarantee an audience.

The way Mollysoda interacts with her readers is dependent on the technical affordances of Tumblr, namely that Tumblr posts do not have comments in the same way that blogs do. A user can reblog someone else's post and annotate the reblog, but conversations are often strewn across multiple Tumblrs and difficult to follow. Tumblr does allow readers to ask questions – Mollysoda both asks and answers questions, posting the answer on Tumblr and thus creating a legible dialog with her readers. Her "Inbox Full" video showed that she gets as much hate mail and negative comments as she does support from her readers. But publicly, audience interaction is measured in numbers, specifically how many reblogs or "likes" a post gets. These visual metrics are available to all, and become stand-ins for social status, signaling to the Tumblr owner (and the public at large) that the site is worthwhile (Marwick 2013b). (Interestingly, Tumblr does not display how many followers a blog has.)

Mollysoda fully admits that her involvement in Tumblr stemmed from her desire for attention. She said in an interview, "Tumblr existed as a security blanket for me, somewhere where I could project all of my crazy displaced emotions and needy feelings in exchange for some sort of validation in the form of 'likes' and 'reblogs'" (Abascal 2013). The thousands of comments that Mollysoda gets on each post may provide instant feedback and gratification, especially when she posts selfies crying late at night or gloomily speculating on a failed relationship.

Mollysoda's micro-celebrity practice must be situated not only within Tumblr, but specifically within the transgressive teen-girl visual aesthetic identified by Eler and Durbin. Her animated gifs of naked people would be shocking on fashion blogs, for instance, which value a much more traditional performance of femininity. A YouTube video of Mollysoda covering 1980s teen idols Wham!'s hit "Last Christmas" in an 8-bit candy wonderland might be considered bizarre if posted on Facebook. Mollysoda's visual sensibility and art is deeply contextualized within a particular technological platform and subculture. Inside the slice of Tumblr populated by teenage girls coming to terms with sexuality, femininity, feminism, and publicity, Mollysoda's actions make sense. And while her content may look different from that of many micro-celebrities, her practices – having an easily consumable public persona, posting information to create personal ties with the audience, and directly corresponding with followers – are the same.

YouTube: Miranda Sings

Miranda Sings was first brought to my attention by one of my students, a huge fan of her YouTube videos who had seen her perform several times in New York.² (The other students stared at him blankly whenever he mentioned her in class.) Miranda Sings is a character played by Colleen Ballinger in a series of YouTube videos, a talentless musical theater aficionada who nonetheless takes her career as a dancer, model, actress, and singer – a "four threat" – very seriously (Eggar 2010). Miranda

began as a satire of Ballinger's college classmates, "self-unaware performers who post overly-dramatic and musically-deficient videos online" (M. Allen 2013). Ballinger deftly satirizes wannabe celebrities who post home-made videos to YouTube, hoping to follow in Justin Bieber's footsteps as the latest star to be discovered online. In Miranda's videos, she warbles popular songs off-key, gives questionable singing and dancing advice, and responds to positive and negative comments from fans. Her videos have collectively garnered more than 50 million views, and she has adapted her Miranda persona to a touring cabaret act, performed to overwhelmingly positive reviews across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (M. Allen 2013). Miranda is a cult favorite in musical theater circles, but exemplifies the niche micro-celebrity who has garnered great online popularity but avoided the attention of mainstream media (with the exception of her recent MTV *True Life* episode, which I discuss below).

While Miranda has a variety of social media accounts, her fame is "native" to YouTube; it is where she first became popular, and most of her other accounts simply serve as promotion for her YouTube channel. Unlike people like Mollysoda who are "playing themselves," her success relies on her ability to consistently embody and physically perform the same character throughout her online presence. As such, Miranda's public persona is immediately recognizable, well-defined, and remarkably constant across platforms. The character wears baggy, unflattering clothes and thickly applied red lipstick that resembles clown makeup. Her videos are shot in messy rooms or her poorly lit suburban kitchen. Miranda's blithe lack of self-awareness and immense confidence in her own beauty, talent and fame never waver (Pascucci 2013). While Miranda's fans, called "Mirfandas," are in on the joke, part of Miranda's appeal is that she is inevitably taken seriously by annoyed viewers, who post angry comments on her YouTube videos and Instagram pictures to the delight of her fans ("You got most of the song WRONG even I know it and I have only listen to it twice learn the songs before you sing them ☺!"). Miranda is not immediately legible as a parody, as her delusional self-presentation is both comprehensive and uniform across her personal website, Instagram, Twitter account, and YouTube channel. Regardless of site, Miranda misspells words, posts awkward selfies, articulates words strangely, uses inappropriate hashtags, and doles out doubtful moral guidance. (For instance, in her "Twerking tutorial" video, in which she demonstrates "her own version of twerking, because I think it's fun to be a sexy lady, but only if you're respectable," she instructs viewers to leave videos of their own Miranda-style twerking tagged "Hashtag no porn, get rid of porn style twerking! For Miranda!" (Miranda Sings 2013).) Unlike many micro-celebrities who are performing a version of themselves, however idealized, Ballinger is self-consciously performing a comprehensively formed and realized theatrical character.

Miranda furthers her ties with her audience by interacting with fans, primarily through her videos, but also at in-person meet and greets at her shows and by individually replying to fan mail. She regularly posts two videos a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, and takes requests from commenters, who urge her to cover the latest popular song or musical theater success. In each video, Miranda calls out particularly nice or mean comments, inspiring some Mirfandas to post negative

comments in hope that they might be featured. While her real identity is hardly a secret, as Ballinger posts bloopers of Miranda videos on her personal YouTube channel and gives interviews out of character, fans delight in their shared knowledge of Miranda's performance and the talentless hopefuls she is skewing. Mirfandas can take pleasure in their communal understanding that they are "insiders." Colleen's personal YouTube channel, which includes footage of her family, friends, and daily life in addition to singing and comedy, recently reached over 400,000 subscribers. By producing videos of her "real life," she can strengthen the emotional bonds with her audience.

In late 2013, Colleen appeared on MTV's *True Life*, a long-running documentary-style show which explores various aspects of modern teenage life like family conflicts, jobs, and addiction. The episode, titled "I'm famous online," revolved around Colleen's boyfriend Josh and his jealousy of the time Miranda requires. Colleen is shown answering enormous binders of fan mail, being approached constantly by fans, and meeting with her manager – she describes Miranda as a "24/7 job." By the end of the episode, Colleen has helped Josh set up a live show, and says she has found balance between love and career. After the episode aired, Colleen posted a tearful video with Josh on her personal YouTube channel saying that choosing to do the video was "one of the worst decisions I've ever made. I feel like an idiot for agreeing to it and thinking they would portray my life how it actually is." She said that MTV filmed her for six months, but selectively edited the footage to create dramatic conflict and focused on the negative aspects of her relationship with her boyfriend. She told her fans, "The truth is, we're YouTubers, and we show you guys what we want to show you on the internet, so we're gonna show happiness and positivity. But we're people, and we have fights, and we have bad moments, because we're humans" (Ballinger 2013). Even when stepping outside of the Miranda Sings character, Colleen selectively portrays her life. Giving editing power to MTV made it impossible to maintain the level of control she has with her YouTube channels, and threatened the authenticity key to maintaining micro-celebrity.

Discussion: Social Media and the Attention Economy

With the increase in broadband and mobile access, the "always on" nature of social media encourages celebrities and those aspiring to be famous to share constant details of their day-to-day life. At the same time, the visible, comparable metrics of social media success – the number of followers or "likes" on a piece of content – encourages the active inculcation of an audience. As a result, celebrities and micro-celebrities alike use social media to create persistent streams of content, competing for the largest number of listeners. These techniques are part and parcel of an online attention economy in which page views and clicks are synonymous with success. In 1997, Michael Goldhaber argued that while the internet has provided people with an abundance of information, this has simultaneously created a scarcity of attention,

making attention an extremely valuable resource. He admitted finding personal satisfaction in reaching a wide audience, and clarified:

it is possible to enthrall any number of people if you can reach them and if you are good enough at it. So having attention is very, very desirable, in some ways infinitely so, since the larger the audience, the better. And, yet, attention is also difficult to achieve owing to its intrinsic scarcity. That combination makes it the potential driving force of a very intense economy. (Goldhaber 1997)

The “attention economy” is now a widespread marketing strategy which implies that in a media-saturated world full of information, what is valuable is that which can attract “eyeballs” (Fairchild 2007). As a result, not only brands, but individuals now compete for limited attention. Brands make viral videos and post funny gifs so they can sell products; individuals take selfies and write blog posts for personal satisfaction, ego boosts, or the increase in personal status that can result from online popularity (Marwick 2013b). While Mollysoda’s brand is edgy, provocative, and counter-cultural, she is using attention-getting techniques pioneered by both celebrities and consumer brands in order to get comments, likes, reblogs, and followers. Micro-celebrities, however, may not be able to convert this attention to financial capital; Miranda Sings may be supporting herself from her videos, but she is hardly living MTV’s *Cribs* lifestyle. The desire for fame, which is often a desire for economic security, is replaced with a desire for *attention*, which is quite different, and requires constant, ongoing labor.

The world of micro-celebrity exists as a parallel to the world of traditional celebrity, with similar dynamics in some ways but quite different ones in others. The fans of Miranda Sings are just as ardent as those of mainstream pop stars, but she is far more accessible to them than even a “subcultural” celebrity might be. Mollysoda’s visual aesthetic does not resemble that of any conventional celebrity, but she has great status within the subcultural world of Tumblr. Neither woman’s fame comes from broadcast media. Instead, they use the affordances of their technologies of choice – Tumblr and YouTube – for both creative production and display of emotional vulnerability. While Mollysoda argues that she is just being herself online, she is presenting a persona complete with stage name, immediately recognizable visual aesthetics, and appealing messiness. Colleen Ballinger’s character of Miranda Sings is simply a stage persona, much like RuPaul’s over-the-top drag self or Bette Midler’s raunchy Soph character, who allowed Midler to tell off-color Borscht Belt jokes without diminishing her own theatrical bona fides (Vineyard 2014). Colleen, though, also produces videos under her own name about her “real life,” including her boyfriend, her family, and her emotional reactions to problems and issues.

Both Mollysoda and Miranda demonstrate that while we expect a certain degree of artifice from celebrities, one of the key attributes of micro-celebrity practitioners is that they are *authentic*. Fans of fashion bloggers, for instance, consistently name “authenticity” as a value that differentiates bloggers from fashion magazines, which traffic in luxury goods that are unaffordable to many, displayed on models who

scarcely resemble average women (Marwick 2013c). Micro-celebrity practitioners know their fans, respond to them, and often feel an obligation to continue this interaction to boost their popularity, breaking down the traditional audience/performer spectator/spectacle dichotomy. The micro-celebrity has direct interaction with fans, while traditional celebrities only give the illusion of interaction and access. (While social media have also changed the way that broadcast celebrities interact with fans, they often use social media to perform the insider authenticity expected online while maintaining a public face (Muntean and Petersen 2009; Marshall 2010; Marwick and boyd 2011b).) Regularly viewing the cast of a television show in one's living room every week creates a feeling of intimacy and familiarity that communication scholars Horton and Wohl called "para-social interaction" (1956); these para-social relationships can be emotionally gratifying, to the point where people tune in to particular programs to check in with their friends. Micro-celebrity extends this to networked webs of actual interaction, such as instant messenger, @replies, comments, and face-to-face meetings. This interaction is crucial to maintaining the micro-celebrity practitioner's popularity and becomes part of their personal brand. For instance, in an article about young YouTube stars, a 12-year old girl said: "YouTube gives you the opportunity to interact with [micro-celebrities] directly, and in the comments with other people who like them" (West 2014). This ideal is common to social media, which follow a many-to-many model of content transmission rather than the one-to-many model of broadcast media, but it also suggests accountability and responsiveness to the audience far beyond what mainstream celebrities usually provide to their fans.

This authenticity is often set up in contrast to mainstream celebrities who, as gossip aficionados can explain in detail, often have public personas that are directly at odds with the realities of their lives; Rock Hudson's public romantic relationships were with women, whereas in his private life he preferred the company of men. While in the 1950s some fans might have believed that Lana Turner was discovered at a soda fountain, in the modern age one of the pleasures of celebrity is exposing the realities of the celebrity publicity machine. Daniel Boorstin's pioneering work on "pseudo-events," for instance, argued that the press conference and the ribbon-cutting ceremony were events that existed only to be televised (1961). Their meaning was otherwise nonexistent; they were fabricated, inauthentic, and theatrical. Today, events choreographed entirely for the benefit of the media are well understood. Savvy celebrity-watchers can tell the difference between a truly candid snapshot and a "pap walk," a prearranged paparazzi photograph of a celebrity walking down the street or leaving a restaurant. Joshua Gamson used the term "game players" to refer to such audiences, who adopt a playful attitude toward the world of celebrities, gossiping, sharing tidbits, and engaging in collective detective work to discover who the celebrity "really" is (1994). The popularity of gossip blogs, which dissect everything from celebrity breakdowns to PR-generated relationships, has widened the scope of this game playing. The desire to discover the "truth" behind celebrities like Tom Cruise or Angelina Jolie is one of the major distinctions between celebrity and micro-celebrity: the presumption is that there is little difference between perceived and actual micro-celebrity personas.

Micro-celebrity's emphasis on attention and authenticity does not always yield positive results. Magibon is a "YouTube idol" who gained rapid worldwide fame for her webcam videos posted to YouTube. A sample video, which got more than 6 million hits, consists of 36 seconds of her staring at the camera with big eyes, blinking, and occasionally saying a few Japanese phrases (Magibon 2008). Magibon exemplified "burikko," a Japanese word that means acting in an exaggeratedly girlish manner, usually to attract young men. Magibon, however, was not Japanese, but an American teenager from rural Pennsylvania who, like many other American teenagers, had a passion for Japanese culture, films, anime, and language. In 2008, the Japanese internet television company GyaO sponsored a trip for her to Japan, with the proviso that she would appear on the show ("Magibon" 2014). Rather than the adorable, big-eyed kawaii pinup she appeared to be on YouTube, she came over as an awkward, nervous teenager, uncomfortable in a situation where she could not control her image. Many people delighted in the discrepancy between her public profile and this somewhat disastrous public appearance – the *schadenfreude* of a faux-Japanese Keane doll being exposed as a regular young American girl. Magibon was called a victim of "internet disease," slang for the phenomenon where internet dating profiles and selfies are tweaked to make the creator seem thinner, sexier, and younger than they appear in real life.

Magibon's unfortunate exposé reveals that the backlash against micro-celebrity practitioners can be very damning when an "inauthentic" person is revealed. The venom with which online sources like Encyclopedia Dramatica systematically set out to destroy her vlogging career is similar to the impulse which fuels "celebrity cellulite" stories on the cover of *US Weekly*. Perhaps as the artificial nature of traditional celebrity is revealed through blind-item blogs and comments on gossip sites, internet celebrity provides a quirkier, cooler, weirder alternative. Micro-celebrity interactions with their audiences often reveal the intimate details of their thoughts, dreams, food consumption, and sex lives, and they present personas that appear to be less controlled than those of highly regulated, highly consumer brand oriented film and television celebrities. When internet celebrities turn out to be regular, fallible people, without the coterie of managers and agents available to traditional celebrities, their fans may experience intense disappointment.

Conclusion

While there are significant differences between young women like Magibon, Mollysoda, Miranda Sings and their mainstream media counterparts, they each have the ability to attract an enormous amount of attention – in the thousands, tens of thousands, or even millions of viewers. Social media have ushered in a new era in which they enable average people to command audiences as large as those made possible by broadcast media. But because the dynamics of social and mass media are quite different, each lends itself to particular types of celebrity. Social media's micro-celebrities are often niche personalities with very specific audiences that broadcast media could not support; those who are willing to reveal intimate or emotional

material to appeal to viewers; people willing to be accountable and respond directly to audiences; and those prepared to take on unrelenting, often financially unrewarding labor. Analyzing micro-celebrity calls into question the impact of one aspect of fame, attention, on those without the financial and logistical support that celebrity usually brings. Colleen Ballinger agreed to be filmed by MTV thinking it would support her online career, but had a difficult time as she lost control of her online persona to the machinations of the reality program's plot lines, which demanded drama.

E! Online aired a reality show called *#RichKids of Beverly Hills* directly inspired by a popular hashtag on Instagram; the teaser trailer was full of Instagram references, and one of the show's stars said, "I think I'm somewhat Instafamous in the Instagram world." Micro-celebrity as practiced by Mollysoda or Miranda Sings may be considered somewhat of a niche practice, but its dynamics are increasingly a part of everyday life. The ability to view oneself as a celebrity, attract attention, and manage an audience, regardless of the potential downsides, may become a necessary skill. While viewers crave the authentic, the messiness that comes with it can be off-putting. Selectively editing oneself into a palatable product, remaining consistent, and dealing with potentially belligerent audience members are difficult tasks that prioritize performativity over any true sense of self.

Notes

- 1 In *Top Chef*, *RuPaul's Drag Race*, *Shear Genius*, *Ice Road Truckers*, and *Pawn Stars*, respectively.
- 2 I am indebted to James Pascucci for introducing me to Miranda Sings and writing a brilliant analysis of her "theatrical trolling" performances.

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Part Six

Emotional Celebrity

Introduction

Sean Redmond

Celebrity is a passionate creature; it leans towards the frenzy of feeling

It would seem an obvious observation that celebrity culture is intimately tied to the activation of emotions. Through its core practices and processes, celebrity is an emotive apparatus that engages with common modes of feelings and delirious forms of affect. Celebrities situate themselves within broad economies of intimacy, creating para-social relationships that seem particularly strong and heartfelt but which may ultimately disappoint so dependent are they on loose, mediated, and ephemeral connections (Rojek 2004; Redmond 2014). All the subsets of emotion, from love to anger, surprise and sadness, are made manifest through the way celebrities enter our lives. We cry with and for them. They dance in our dreams. They occupy the spaces of event spectacle calling forth our emotions to receive and exalt them. Celebrities register as key moments in biographical and memorial exchanges where fans and consumers story and remember through the event moments they help shaped. The emotion of celebrity matches or catches the emotional encounters we go through, providing the metasetting for love, romance, heartache, and desire. We live emotional lives in and through the emotions of celebrity culture.

Emotional celebrity is tied to the myth of the media center, inviting us to gravitate toward the public as if that is where organic and intensified life takes place. Access to this emotional control center promises liberation and intensification but may ultimately serve to ensnare us within regulated and conformist sets of sensuous expression. Politics operates within this arena of adoration: it has been celebritized, and celebrity politics trades and traffics in the representation of “authentic” emotion and appeals to the ethical feelings inscribed in democratic life. Political rallies are a mark of this cavalcade of affect. O Obama you have spoken to us through your heart and through emotive abstractions that suggest democracy is to be felt and experienced as much as made meaningful through policy and action. In the liquid modern

age, just feeling something replaces active agency, although charismatic leader figures, charged by the embodiment of passionate intensity, have always led people to protest, to fight, to go to war, to kill and be killed.

The passion and frenzy of feeling that celebrity ignites and attaches itself to is part of a wider culture where sense and sensation, revelation and confession, outpouring and gossip have begun to shape the pulsating veins and arteries of everyday life. Celebrity compels us to feel but such feeling may well be in the service of late capitalism and liquid modernity. Emotional celebrity pricks us to feel but in limited ways, creating the conditions for the manufacturing of the neoliberal self that restricts and channels our egos so that we work well, consume well, reproduce well. Celebrity passion and commodity relations go hand-in-hand: the value transference crafted out of emotional appeal and short-form desire.

This is particularly true of the confessional mode of feeling, since the revelation and outpouring serves as a form of the return of the repressed, letting out the carnival of emotions that might otherwise lead to wrack and ruin if left unchecked. The gendered nature of this will to emotional truth is often telling: the confession and its associated forms of gossip are “female” centered, signified by dominant discourse to be inferior modes of expression, and so positioning women within patriarchal frames that limit their access to, and involvement with, the more serious, more “rational” public world. Emotional celebrity, then, is a Janus-faced creature: on the one hand, it creates the conditions for emotional attachment and engagement; on the other, it attaches itself to gendered discourses that devalue those within its callings. This is all context based: emotional celebrity shifts its affecting ground to foreground emotion when it needs to, and to devalue or limit its reach when it threatens normative social and political relations. Too much emotional celebrity is presented as a bad thing, toxic in its impact and import.

There is something syncretic, then, in the way emotional celebrity operates, framed I would suggest between Apollonian and Dionysian forces – between restraint and reason and those impulses which are marked by their frenzy of feeling and vitality – which when brought together create the conditions for the production and consumption of fame to take place. Purchasing a celebrity-endorsed product is both a rational choice and the buying (into) of desire.

Nonetheless, to turn the feeling wheel one more time, emotional celebrity also leads to extreme forms of attachment and outpouring: ultimately, emotions cannot be simply tamed. The instances of stalking, the phenomenon of celebrity worship syndrome, and erotomania point to the condition where an overinvestment in emotional celebrity threatens the stable self and undermines familial relations. In the age of liquid modernity where “togetherness has been dismantled” (Bauman 2000: 21), and social and emotional bonds have been largely rendered ephemeral, people are particularly susceptible to suffering, to anguish and the pains of alienation. They long for connection and are implored to find that emotional attachment to celebrity figures is the answer. Celebrities become the emotional stream of the modern age, steeped in passion, wet with representations that are decidedly experiential, even if all is still held in the iron cage of liquid modern conditions.

Emotion and affect are related if not simultaneous phenomena. As Eric Shouse (2005) argues,

it is important not to confuse affect with feelings and emotions ... Affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social ... and affects are pre-personal ... An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential ... Affect cannot be fully realized in language ... because affect is always prior to and/or outside consciousness ... Affect is the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience. The body has a grammar of its own that cannot be fully captured in language.

Affective celebrity, then, is not the same as personal feeling: it exists outside of language and representational discourse, and rises in somatic and asemiotic realms. Celebrity affect offers up a different set of intensified possibilities for those who employ cross-modal senses to feel beyond feeling. Ultimately, if one embraces the logic of sensation and the vibrations of affect in and through the figure of the celebrity, there is the opportunity to become animal, to be set free on the wild plains of modern life.

I am a passionate creature. I live in the frenzy of feeling

The chapters included in this part approach the theme of emotional celebrity through contrasting and sometimes opposing critical and theoretical frames. The three authors capture, then, the way that emotion has been written about within celebrity studies while also situating their position with exciting new case studies and contexts. As scholars of the field, Rojek and Redmond exist at polar ends of these emotional discussions, the former drawing upon the idea of the para-social to suggest the inherent distance between celebrity and fan, and the latter drawing upon phenomenology and sensory aesthetics to champion experience as has having meaty and transgressive attachments. Driessens places his analysis within field theory and the operations of the body politic, but making a place for affect to be taken seriously.

In Chris Rojek's "Frontierism: 'the frontier thesis,' affect, and the category of achieved celebrity," the focus is closely on the complex relationships between achieved celebrity, affect and social mobility. His method involves contrasting the meaning of conquering boundaries expressed in late nineteenth-century theories of American spatial expansion with the role of achieved celebrity in destabilizing the categories of stratified society. Rojek uses the term "frontierism" to refer to the part played by achieved celebrity in challenging social convention and background expectations. He argues that "achieved celebrity unavoidably involves testing boundaries, since the character of the personal qualities that attract attention capital are honored as unusual and meriting social license. For these reasons, achieved celebrity comes with a degree of what might be called *boundary leverage*." To illustrate and thicken his analysis of the boundary-breaking role of achieved celebrity, Rojek explores the self-promotion and exposure management innovations developed by the artist

circles around Charles Dickens and Richard Wagner. Rojek concludes his chapter by suggesting that in pushing back the barriers of ascribed celebrity in the nineteenth century the reelevated frontier of achieved celebrity allowed in networks of experts on the presentation of personality that quickly became decisive in the accumulation of attention capital. This transformation took the form of breeching the barriers of stratification and building the cult of personality.

In Olivier Driessens's "The democratization of celebrity: mediatization, promotion, and the body," he develops a thesis around the increased ubiquity of celebrity. He argues that set against a general background of "secularization and modernization the spectrum of possibilities to become a celebrity has relatively widened, while new technologies of attention simulate intimacy to exert affect, and intensified and globalized capitalism has increasingly commodified the celebrity body." Driessens uniquely places his analysis of the democratization of celebrity over an extended period of history, composed of three main historical shifts or waves, each corresponding loosely with certain periods in time. First, there is the shift from ascribed to achieved celebrity; second, is the shift from achieved to attributed celebrity; and third, is what is read as the recent shift to the growing but often temporary popularity, both for the audiences and the celebrity and media industries, of reality TV and DIY celebrities. Driessens applies to each of these waves the complexities of what democracy, democratic and demotic might mean and how they have uneven trajectories. At each stage, affect becomes increasingly crucial to the politics and poetics of celebrity democratization.

In "Sensing celebrities," Sean Redmond explores celebrity through the lens of sensory aesthetics and embodied phenomenology. His position is that one can and should make sense of celebrities as a certain type of corporeal experience, composed of, and involved in circulating, clusters of affects and intensities. Redmond draws upon the unique concept of the celebaesthetic subject to address what he sees as the intersubjective relationship between fan and celebrity. He undertakes a sense-based textural analysis of American TV, film and pop star Miley Cyrus in terms of the way she embodies and sensorializes a heightened form of being-in-the-world. Using Miley as a case study also allows Redmond to draw into his analysis the issue of gender and race, and the way conductive "skin" can be made to function as a sensory stereotype. However, he finally concludes that the poetics of the skin can act as a way of liberating the body from its conditioned docility. In sensing celebrities we liberate ourselves.

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Frontierism

“The Frontier Thesis,” Affect, and the Category of Achieved Celebrity

Chris Rojek

Ascribed celebrity is a social category based ultimately upon privilege. The privilege in question is a matter of rank. Van Kriekan (2012) coined the useful term *attention capital* to refer to the social impact that derives from celebrity status. Chiefly, in the matter of ascribed celebrity, attention capital derives from the social position that a person occupies, rather than from the personal qualities of the occupant. Thus, it is not necessary to like the monarch as an individual in order to display a positive affective response to the social position of the occupant of the throne. The roots of ascribed celebrity lie in tradition, custom and habit. Since ascription follows social hierarchy, ascribed celebrity is, overwhelmingly, a conservative influence in society. It rests upon the reproduction of social order rather than the urge to innovate.

Achieved celebrity refers to the attention capital accumulated by virtue of an individual's talents, skills and accomplishments. Unlike the ascribed form, it is based in an affective relation with the person rather than the social position of the occupant. Achieved celebrity entails a type of attention capital that derives from the social perception of unusual personal qualities. The most fully developed form is the charismatic personality. Following Max Weber's classic discussion (1968: 1111–57), charismatic leaders are persons with qualities that are publicly perceived to be extraordinary or superhuman. They command intense personal loyalty from followers and believers which, in appropriate social, economic and political conditions, permit them to operate as a revolutionary force throughout society. Weber was intent on insisting that genuinely charismatic leadership is always revolutionary. Not to beat about the bush, it is a form of attention capital that transforms the economic, political and civil character of society. Ian Kershaw's monumental biography of Adolf Hitler, and the social and economic conditions that gave rise to him, pays tribute to the utility of Weber's concept of charismatic leadership in explaining Hitler's extraordinary power in Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s (1998: xiii; 2000). Genuine charismatic leaders are very rare in human society. In contrast, achieved

celebrities have become commonplace. The enlargement of the form is related to the growth of mass media, the spread of cultural literacy and the multiplication of personality types based upon acceptance and approval.¹ Achieved celebrity is capable of generating very intense, durable levels of emotional identification and fierce loyalty. However, while it may entail the capacity to challenge convention, it is not a genuine revolutionary force. Its social impact is uneven. In some cases, its effect on social life can disrupt vested interests and challenge social convention. Despite this, the real transformation of society and culture is left to the charismatic leader.

In this chapter I want to focus closely on the relationship between achieved celebrity, affect and innovation. In particular, I am going to fasten upon what I take to be a neglected issue in the study of celebrity, namely the complex relationships between achieved celebrity, affect and social mobility. My method will be to contrast the meaning of conquering boundaries expressed in late nineteenth-century theories of American spatial expansion with the role of achieved celebrity in destabilizing the boundaries of stratified society. The self-promotion and exposure management innovations developed by the circles around Charles Dickens and Richard Wagner will be investigated to substantiate the boundary-breaking role of achieved celebrity. Elsewhere, I used the term “frontierism” to refer to the part played by achieved celebrity in challenging social convention and background expectations (Rojek 2012: 37–9). I hold that achieved celebrity unavoidably involves testing boundaries, since the character of the personal qualities that attract attention capital are honored as unusual and meriting social license. For these reasons, achieved celebrity comes with a degree of what might be called *boundary leverage*. That is, the view that the exceptional personal qualities of the occupant merits leeway, twinned with the assured confidence of the occupant that the conduct of achieved celebrity is not necessarily fettered by precedent or protocol. Once individuals are perceived to possess extraordinary talents and accomplishments, it becomes self-defeating to insist that they be strictly bound by ordinary rules. We don’t want them to be just like us, because the honor awarded to them is predicated in acceptance that they are exceptional beings.

Boundary leverage is a matter of having the personal capacity to bend rules. The process of easing or thrusting rules in this or that direction is called “edgework.” The term was originally introduced and developed by social psychologists to refer to the reaction against emotional control and regimentation. It was a response to the paradox that as standards of security in society extend and become more embedded, for some individuals and groups the voluntary development of high risk behaviors becomes attractive. Examples include extreme sports, high risk occupations, drug experimentation and so on (Lyng 1990; 2004). Edgework is analyzed as a reaction against standardizing forces that rob the individual of choice and freedom (Lyng 1990: 857). The work of Jack Katz (1990) adds an important ingredient to the edgework perspective. His focus is upon the pleasure generated in criminal activity. Katz departs from conventional accounts of crime that privilege the causal influence of genetic and environmental factors. Instead, he highlights the emotional appeal and hedonistic pleasure involved in lawbreaking. At the level of experience, Katz maintains, crime can be stimulating, exciting and appealing. The core of this is not so

much a matter of engaging in building deviant identity, as the sheer delight in rule infraction.

Achieved celebrities are not, for the most part, labeled deviants. At the same time they are generally beheld to possess talents, skills and accomplishments that are rare or even unique. This perception is the seedbed of attention capital. We allow achieved celebrities room for edgework because we hold that they possess personal qualities that are either in short supply or without precedent. Needless to say, this can be exploited in ways that produce a negative social reaction. Unquestionably, boundary leverage lends itself to self-indulgence. It permits achieved celebrities to get away with behavior that would not otherwise be tolerated. Well-documented cases include Charlie Sheen's highly public battle with substance abuse; Lindsay Lohan's problems with alcoholism and her violation of the terms of her probation for driving under the influence (DUI); and Mel Gibson's issues with alcohol abuse, his anti-Semitic outburst, and the restraining order made against him in respect of alleged domestic violence by his ex-partner.²

This does not tell the whole story about achieved celebrity, boundary leverage and edgework. Boundary leverage does not necessarily result in behavior that triggers negative social reactions. The status of achieved celebrity may be of sufficient magnitude to challenge power and convention in progressive ways with impunity. The growing interest in celanthropy examines how celebrity status is exploited and developed in the cause of political activism (Cooper 2008; Wheeler 2013). For example, Bono, Angelina Jolie and George Clooney transfer attention capital accumulated in the entertainment arena to humanitarian and activist interventions in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Celebrities have a long history in public diplomacy. Danny Kaye was appointed the first UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) goodwill ambassador in 1954. Subsequent ambassadors include Audrey Hepburn, Peter Ustinov, Mia Farrow, Vanessa Redgrave, Roger Moore, Danny Glover and Shakira.³ UNICEF has developed the program on the proposition that celebrity attention capital helps to focus the eyes of the world upon issues of the abuse of power and child poverty. There are many other examples of celebrity intervention in human rights issues and criticism of power.⁴

There is then a clear relationship between achieved celebrity, boundary leverage and edgework. Celebrity frontierism describes the aggregate of relationships between these variables. Innovation is integral to achieved celebrity since the status involves discarding a nondescript, unrecognized identity of origin and building a distinctive, acknowledged public identity. We allow celebrities boundary leverage because we are persuaded that they possess attention capital that bestows public honor upon them. The honorific relationship provides latitude for celebrity edgework which interprets settings and plays roles in ways that challenge social boundaries.

Edgework and frontierism are inherent in ordinary social relationships. In his study of the emotional labor of highway drivers, preschool children and suspects under police interrogation, Katz (1999) demonstrates ordinary practices of edgework. The boundary leverage of achieved celebrities enables them to engage in this type of emotional labor in a more fully developed form. The conflation and

application of personality and attention capital in celebrity frontierism is distinctive. One way to demonstrate this is to compare the edgework of achieved celebrities with ordinary boundary challenges. In addition, it may be contrasted sharply with earlier approaches to frontierism which privilege building character as the main instrument of repulsing and challenging boundaries. The attention capital of character in this version of frontierism is predicated in the accumulation of property. Celebrity frontierism encompasses property as a component of attention capital, but recognizes personality and social impact to be the crux of the matter. In order to expand and give depth to these comments it is necessary to turn to a thesis that explicitly relates frontierism to character building and property accumulation. This can then be used as an informative contrast with the content and dynamics of celebrity frontierism.

Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis"

The concept of the frontier is familiar to students of American history and mythology (Webb 1952; Billington 1966; Slotkin 1973; 1985; 1992). Less so, to students of celebrity. The canonical text is widely agreed to be Frederick Jackson Turner's (1920) thesis of the American Frontier. The thesis is really a disguised treatise justifying American exceptionalism. Later objections that the frontier was a land-grabbing exercise, or that Westward migration involved the uprooting and elimination of native people, do not seem to have crossed his mind. If they did, he omitted to address them at length in the text. It would be going too far to maintain that he anticipates Theodor Roosevelt's (1907) frankly racist account. This portrait depicts racially superior frontier settlers bravely facing wilderness and the hostility of native barbarians and triumphing through principled commitment to self-government and adroit military conquest. Roosevelt understands history along classical Social Darwinian lines as a perpetual struggle between rivals for survival. The racially superior type (white settlers) seize the frontier "wasteland" and, through industry and enterprise, till and build upon it to produce prosperity. Turner is no closet racist. Nonetheless, he shares the evolutionist doctrine that it is the manifest destiny of the white race to prevail in the West and remake the world in their own image.

For Turner, the frontier represents the efflorescence of American character. It encourages a providential combination of three distinct elements to develop fully: individualism, democracy, and dynamism. The connotation of heroism and vitality with the restless frontier echoes ancient Greek and Roman precedents. However, for Turner (1920), only in America are the qualities of individualism, democracy and dynamism made consummate. Their progress in the Old World was retarded. The entrenchment of aristocratic privilege made deference and servility commonplace. From Turner's standpoint, the revolutions in England (1642–51) and France (1789) neglected to erase the imprimatur of the *ancien régime*. Instead, they led to mere revisions of social order in which many aspects of the established hierarchies of rank and privilege continued to be passively observed. In consequence, the advance of real individualism, democracy and dynamism was stunted. The Puritan migrants broke with many aspects of this culture. Despite this, their understanding of natural law

and social order was irremediably marked by their origins. Privilege and deference (loyalty to the King and respect for Tradition) were part of their makeup. Hence the enormous heart-searching, breast-beating and hand-wringing in the 13 states, when the demand for revolution and independence started to acquire momentum (Bailyn 1975). In the Old World the settled nature of land ownership and rights of cultivation meant that there was no fertile expanse in the continent for migrants to settle and develop. In contrast, America offered what amounted to a subcontinent of surplus space.

Of course, the "surplus" land question in America was a misnomer. By casting the American West as legitimate space for annexation, the settlers both negated the validity of native rights and established the principle that every pioneer with the required properties of hard work and ambition had the right to be a landowner. It was hardly necessary for all to physically follow the roll of the wagons to the West. From the time of the first European settlers, to the present day, the prospect of the frontier as a place of escape and opportunity hovers invitingly over American perspectives on upward social mobility. This is engrained in the evolutionary dimension of Turner's thesis which portrays the frontier as a perpetually expanding boundary of hope.

For Turner, the frontier provides the catalyst for the formation of the distinctive traits of national character. The ferocious challenges of the wilderness and opposing native forces call upon the mobilization of hereditary principles of toughness and self-reliance. But this is not enough. The new physical and social spaces require individuals to rewrite the rule book and consciously reinvent themselves. The response to leaving the hallowed conventions and cozy customs of the eastern seaboard is the elaboration of a new form of rugged individualism that breaks with the character straitjacket found on the Atlantic shore. On the question of democracy, Turner maintains that pioneers face the universal challenge of survival against adversity and the task of thriving by virtue of their own wits and labor. These conditions breed a unique aura of neighborliness and cooperation, which is the foundation of New World democracy. Finally, Turner contends, the Westward push was inherently dynamic. The very decision to go to the West reveals personal dynamism and ambition. This was reinforced by the threats and opportunities offered by the New World. The expanding frontier provides fertile soil for nothing less than the apotheosis of American character.

This thesis was a massive influence upon generations of scholars. It became a benchmark for understanding American character. However, it has not passed through history unscathed. Critics contend that it exaggerates individualism, misrepresents democracy and distorts the dynamism behind the Western push. The settlers were not free and equal men. Many represented mercantile interests or were bound to trading companies in the Old World; they differed appreciably in wealth and power (by 1860 the richest 20 percent of households on the frontier owned 64 percent of the wealth (Pessen 1971; Wright 1978)); and they were locked in to the imperatives of global capital, which meant that commercialization and land speculation quickly asserted themselves (Slotkin 1992: 57–8).

The very etymology of Turner's concept has been queried (Juricek 1966). The English word "frontier" derives from the classical Latin root (*front* or *forepart*) via

the later medieval Latin term “*fronteria*,” meaning line of battle. In America, the earliest usage was also the most common. Frontier designated a “fortress” on the frontier or “frontier town” (Juriceck 1966: 10–11). On this reading, Turner oversimplifies the meaning of the frontier by skipping over the military, defensive lineages in the term and instead amplifying the links with expansion, liberation and opportunity.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the frontier thesis retains a powerful hold on the American imagination. Partially, this reflects the complex condensation of associations and representations embodied in the concept. Psychologically and symbolically, the frontier is more complex than it seems at first sight. *Inter alia*, it stands for perennial rebirth, creativity, mobility (social and geographical), freedom, escape, promise, opportunity, daring, resourcefulness, restlessness, purification, redemption, and conquest. In Turner’s words, the frontier “breaks the cake of custom” (1920: 205) and signifies the birth of the New Canaan on the American mainland.

There are two dimensions of the Turner thesis which are not always clearly separated. Outwardly, it expresses the Westward move to conquer space and transform it to productive ends. Spatial conquest is conceived as a matter of transforming “emptiness” into property that yields value. However, attached to this spatial transformation is a corresponding social transformation. The Westward push designates an imaginative expanse where social being may be tested, reinvented, reframed and crucially, for our purposes, admired and relished. Turner’s logic on the relationship between the frontier and character building is very orthodox. He regards the engagement with Wilderness and the Native population as the catalyst for the reinvigoration of American character. A sort of abstract celebrity is unintentionally created in the process: the Western kinsman. That is, the American everyman whose initiative, forbearance and skill in subduing the wilderness operates as the inspiration of the nation, and the world.

Character and Personality

Viewed categorically, Turner’s thesis of frontierism may be defined as a hypothesis of character-building founded upon the conquest of the horizontal (spatial) frontier and the accumulation of property. Conversely, celebrity frontierism is a hypothesis having to do with the elevation of the cult of personality, based in the conquest of the vertical (stratified) frontier and the accumulation of attention capital. The acquisition of property is not necessarily excluded from achieved celebrity, but it is subordinate to the goal of gaining social impact. In everyday speech, character is frequently used as a synonym for personality. Actually, the content of each is quite separate. Brown’s classic definition of the psychology of character holds that, “character is the result of the building up of habits of action on the basis of circumstances and heredity, and we are thus thrown back to earlier and earlier years for the source of their responsibility” (1926: 126). The accent is upon firm, consistent behavioral traits rooted in the patterns of evolution characteristic of the species. It is in this sense that Turner claims Western frontier settlers to be the apotheosis of American character. The habits of independence, democracy and dynamism that the pioneers

refine in encountering the Wilderness reflect the perfection of the hereditary principles with which they are endowed. Among the habits of action that Turner contends were perfected in American character through the encounter with the frontier are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, self-reliance, fairness and compassion. Not accidentally, when we think of the stereotypical cowboy hero in the classic Western genre, these traits rapidly come to mind.

In contrast, while an evolutionary dimension is acknowledged, most treatments of personality examine the associated traits and habits of action as *situational*. Personality implies a distinction between the private and public face. The person we appear to be at work, in the classroom, in the supermarket, the film set and so on, is not necessarily consistent with the person we are in the domestic setting. Against the concept of character which is founded upon consistency and evolution in traits of identity and habits of action, the concept of personality presupposes a degree of social calculation and hence, variation of behavior in social settings. People invest considerable thought and energy in evaluating the impressions they create in the eyes of others and act in ways that are calculated to produce the desired responses (Leary and Allen 2011: 1192).

In foregrounding the emergence of the new Prometheus in the conquest of the horizontal frontier, Turner failed to notice the immense transformations around him in the stratified society in the Old World involved in the conquest of the vertical frontier. By the 1840s, a range of factors combine in the Old World to expand the social profile of personality in mass culture. Among the most significant are the concentration of populations in urban centers, the expansion and refinement of mass communications, the growth of advertising and the public relations sector, and the advance of cultural literacy (Gundle 2008; Inglis 2010). In Europe the social unrest of the 1840s, climaxing in the signature year of 1848 (which historians know as “the year of revolutions”), exposed the established social order as somewhat more threadbare and precarious than commentators had allowed.⁵ New routes of upward social mobility based in the acquisition of renown were boring through the crystallized accumulations of traditional society. As we shall see presently, in pushing back the vertical frontier, achieved celebrities inevitably challenged established forms of social identity, rules about knowing your place, being dutiful and respectful, all of which disturbed the given distribution of power and influence. They displayed new types of emotional frankness, public intimacy and personal disclosure that mirrored and enriched popular culture and proved immensely appealing to the masses. Achieved celebrity loosened the threads of public mores and made it harder for established power to remain serene that systems of ascribed renown, and the vested interests that buttress them, would prevail in perpetuity. The cheap print culture and new palaces of popular culture and burlesque which were emerging in the great cities of the Eastern seaboard and the Old World were producing noteworthy people from the tenements and streets who became stars, and whose lifestyle and personal values, in many respects, grated with the established order of inherited wealth, taste and privilege.

Now, of course, among the constellation of achieved celebrities, examples of types based in character as well as personality are readily found. But whereas the situation

of the horizontal frontier was believed by Turner to be character forming, since it was based in the appropriation and cultivation of property, the conquest of the vertical frontier is more conditional. Social impact requires personality to be projected and redefined in conformity with public reaction. The horizontal frontier requires one reinvention (from pioneer to property holder). The conquest of the vertical frontier requires continuous reinvention. The qualities of personality are more suitable for social impact because they are more flexible and adaptive. Achieved celebrity belongs to the age of personality. The projection of personality and the capacity for self-reinvention when circumstances require are the keys to social impact.

Since social impact is not constant, social equilibrium between attention capital and the public cannot be presupposed. It follows that the acquisition and persistence of achieved celebrity is a managerial challenge requiring experts. Nowadays, following Bourdieu's field theory (1984; 1993), we would call these figures "cultural intermediaries." By this term Bourdieu means "all the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services" (1984: 359). From the early nineteenth century onward, their involvement in making literature and art more autonomous in the field of cultural production was profound. They are properly described as catalysts of achieved celebrity. Achieved celebrities never arrive "naturally," they are always socially constructed.

What does it mean to claim that achieved celebrity is socially constructed? A great merit of Bourdieu's approach is that it does not fall into the trap of dissolving the talent and accomplishment of achieved celebrities by positioning these qualities as dependent upon the requirements of the corporately controlled culture industry (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979; Schiller 1989). Instead, his understanding of the momentum toward cultural autonomy carefully locates the process in a "field of power." Here culture is theorized as being irretrievably interconnected with economic, political, religious, educational and intellectual interests, but not bound to comply with them. The notion of field is pivotal. It assumes that cultural production occurs in a context where powerful economic interests exist, without being omnipotent. Generally, he assumes that high economic capital does not go with high cultural capital. Likewise, he assumes that there are social components in the field of power, located mainly in the religious, educational and intellectual sectors, which typically have low levels of economic capital but high levels of cultural capital. For Bourdieu, cultural production and autonomy always and already presuppose a field of power. This field determines the nature of the interplay between cultural production and autonomy. By developing techniques of magnetizing public opinion and exposure management, cultural intermediaries made the personalities of achieved celebrities objects of public interest and imitation. In doing so, they looked beyond economic interests, to questions of social conditions, social problems, and psychological responses to social impact and taste. The new achieved celebrities were often more conspicuous and flamboyant than the reserved, hidebound, semi-invisible, mansion-based ascribed celebrities of the established order. As such, they were targets of criticism from the ranks of the ascribed which held that the *nouveaux* were too meretricious and vulgar. What this misses is that it was precisely these qualities

that multiplied the attention capital of the *nouveaux* in the eyes of downtrodden folk. Achieved celebrities had the mobility, social impact and wealth that was systematically derived from the downtrodden. Their public profile signified that the vertical frontier of society was not a locked door. It could be prized open. This was a major source of their appeal. In terms of Bourdieu's field theory, the high economic power of the establishment blinded it to recognizing the cultural capital of *nouveaux* celebrities to the masses (i.e. those of low economic capital), and non-economic components with high cultural capital (i.e. in educational and intellectual sectors). In general, ascribed celebrities and the established interests behind them assumed that the culture of achieved celebrities would prove be a sideshow. Yet some achieved celebrities became durable and powerful influences with the power to capture and shape popular imagination.

The Inimitable, the Sorcerer

Without doubt, two of the most spectacular examples of powerful, durable achieved celebrity in history are Charles Dickens and Richard Wagner. The careers of both are worth considering briefly. For a start, they bring to the surface the confusion between celebrity and achieved celebrity. Celebrity means possessing attention capital that conveys direct social impact. This appears to affix celebrity inextricably to popularity. However, popularity is merely one of the connotations that apply. A celebrity may be notorious, in the sense of being regarded as venal or evil, as well as admired and popular. Because it often arises via adventitious circumstances, the relationship between celebrity and social impact carries a high propensity toward disequilibrium. In contrast, achieved celebrity suggests cultural renown, which contains a measure of both extent and longevity with respect to the matter of social impact. Achieved celebrity may spring from adventitious circumstances, but assiduous exposure management and careful accumulation of attention capital can prolong, and greatly magnify, fame.

The question of assiduous exposure management is pertinent in the cases of Dickens and Wagner. Both were formidable exponents of self-promotion, long before the term was invented. They sincerely lamented the replacement of community with individualism and personal ambition brought about by the industrial revolution. Dickens returns repeatedly in his novels to idealized (preindustrial) visions of the "old times," and Wagner reaches back to the ancients for models of community consisting of connectivity, taste and vitality. When he gave his public readings Dickens usually commenced by inviting the audiences (usually numbering thousands) to imagine that they were encircled with him by a fireside. The homely image of the hearth immediately suggests family bonds between the author and his readers that city haste, division and hurry cannot dispel. The effect was to impart a mystical, primordial connection between Dickens and his audience. The same suggestion can be found in the tireless self-promotion and image-building activities of Wagner. It is directly present in the librettos of the operas with their deep preoccupation with ancient myths and fate. It is also apparent in his publications on the German *volk*, which idealized their purity of being, and his habitual, romantic practice of

presenting himself as the personification of all that is great, good and true in the German character. Like Dickens, Wagner regarded his art as a means to engineer cultic identification.

Neither Dickens nor Wagner were strictly backward looking. They may have raided traditional opinions, prejudices, practices and related aesthetic and historical motifs, partly in order to diminish the magnitude of the social and economic gap that separated them from their audience. Nonetheless, both were stamped with an implacably dynamic modernist consciousness. They viewed themselves as springing from the ranks of the people and operating in a new social space that lies beyond the condescension of the gentry and traditional critics. Both seized the day in exploiting the new machinery of mass communications in the single-minded project to build their respective accumulations of attention capital. Dickens resorted to radical campaigning and, later in life, to public performance in the shape of scores of transatlantic readings to pursue this end. Wagner invented so many techniques of self-promotion that it is difficult to comment upon them in a few words. He may have promoted his art to be transcendent and to speak to an audience not yet fully born. Despite this he turned to cunning product placement exercises to extol his genius and establish the revolutionary nature of his works in the press, extravagant autobiographical accounts of heroic perseverance against crippling obstacles, and the creation of an entire physical space intended to be everlasting – Bayreuth – to galvanize the attention of his peers and to seal his reputation for posterity. Adorno (1981) was so struck by this that he commented that the antecedents of the culture industry reach back to Wagner.

The question of why Dickens and Wagner as cultural producers were lifted so decisively to the apex of achieved celebrity that they are now numbered among the immortals is complex. It continues to exercise commentators (Vazsonyi 2012; Rodensky 2009; John 2010; Trippett 2010; Millington 2012). To frame their celebrity as simply a testament to their art misses the extraordinary energies they expended in constructing a notable public image through self-promotion, exposure management and the accumulation of attention capital. These were not men who acquired celebrity in a fit of daydreaming. They may have conducted themselves as if their art is purely disinterested and reflects nothing but a creative urge that they could not control. There is no doubt that they also ruthlessly pursued a programmatic vision of personal renown that was designed to bulldoze the frontier of achieved celebrity and outlast their mortal days.

The claim has been made that Dickens achieved celebrity by virtue of his peerless artistry in yoking together the radical broadsheet tradition, that began in the early 1820s in the verbal and visual satires directed against George IV and his bumbling ministers after the Peterloo Massacre, with the culture and political interests of “the People” (Ledger 2007: 232). He was no shrinking violet in this respect. In private correspondence he often referred to himself as “the inimitable.” Yet Dickens’s relationship with “the People” was very complicated and often fractious (Rodensky 2009). His fiction and public statements leave readers in no doubt that he rejected the use of mob violence and deplored many aspects of the mass market populace. Before crossing the North Atlantic for the first time to visit America he expected to

find utopia. He returned sadder and wiser, finding in American consumer culture a paradigm of isolated individualism and unbridled materialism. Perhaps, it is nearer the mark to propose that solar celebrity in the case of Dickens was attained because he miraculously personified the full range of magnificent and grotesque changes and ambiguities involved in the replacement of traditional society with the new urban-industrial order. This applied to his mode of self-promotion and exposure management as well as to his writing. Only superficially, as in the matter of the monstrous *bonhomie* he insisted in applying in his troubled household, is it remotely plausible to describe him as a traditionalist. The waifs, strays, heroes, heroines and gargoyles in his novels are the embodiments of modern, strident capital's unending multiple contradictions. In *Dombey and Son* (1848), *Bleak House* (1853) and *Great Expectations* (1860) capital operates as the implacable force that propels characters into this or that course of action despite their will. It was in Utilitarian blood to descant from the pulpit about the providential nature of this operation. Dickens dissented. The composition of characters like Mr Pecksniff, Thomas Gradgrind and the Veneerings sought to knock the stuffing out of the Utilitarian credo. His characters are propelled by forces that are not of their own making, but which are fetishized and renewed through the remorseless logic of their own conduct. The will of the greatest majority is often exposed as the prejudices of the hoodwinked, and providence is routinely pilloried as a confidence trick practiced by the pampered over the downtrodden.

It was insufficient to confine this to the pages of his novels. His approach to capturing public interest and building attention capital was pursued in a dedicated, energetic, pluralist fashion. He wrote, directed and acted in six stage plays, including *The Frozen Deep* with Wilkie Collins. Between 1853 and the time of his death, he performed some 472 public readings in Britain and America (Collins 1975). The readings merit a moment's consideration because they unintentionally expose his determination to imprint his personality, rather than merely his art, upon social consciousness. Contemporary accounts comment on the stripped-down nature of the stage set. It consisted of a small reading desk, a book and, sometimes, a glass, jug of water, gloves, a handkerchief and a paper knife. There were no costume changes. The lighting arrangements were plain and avoided ornamentation of any sort. Dickens simply faithfully read and acted out the characters from his writings. Evidently, his purpose was not just to remind the audience of the phenomenal range and power of his fiction. He also sought to present himself as a phenomenon. "Dickens's performances," comments Ferguson, "were not simply of *his* characters, but of *himself*, or, more accurately of his public persona" ((2001: 731, emphasis in the original). The transatlantic schedule of public readings, delivered to audiences numbering thousands, without modern benefits of amplification, dominated the last decade of his life. The considerable financial rewards acquired were counterbalanced by the physical costs of the regime. Dickens was aware of the toll that the readings took on his health, but he seemed obsessively compelled to set aside worries about sickness and mortality, in favor of advancing the cause of his personal social impact and its "affective (and financial) aspects" (Andrews 2006: 11). The distaste that Dickens felt for "emotionally frigid" audiences and his relish for "openness," the "immediate," "unrefined," "spontaneous reciprocation," antipathy to "ceremony" and

“formality,” is symptomatic of a personality that sees itself as located on the frontier of achieved celebrity, but alive to its heritage (Andrews 2006: 18; Bevis 2001: 332). Unconsciously, and deliberately, he presents the virtues of achieved celebrity against the stuffy title and rank that accompanies the ascribed celebrity of the established order. He projects his personality as a combination of extraordinary talents and accomplishments raised from humble origins. This is further illustrated by his repeated accounts of the manner in which his ascent to fame was beset with enormous obstacles and disadvantages of birth. In his later life, his agonized recollections of the humiliation of being sent to work as a child in a blacking factory, when his parents fell into financial hardship, became an obsession. In spite of this, the motif of heroic emergence from the social and economic depths is central to Dickens’s version of achieved celebrity. He must demonstrate that he knows the circumstances of the people, that he directly experiences the sufferings and misfortunes that they go through, in order to replenish and seal his achieved status.

Much the same applies to Wagner. The child of a clerk and a baker’s daughter, he consistently portrays himself as scrabbling forth from an unremarkable background and succeeding against formidable odds. This is examined and consolidated along multiple fronts. His humble origins; his political radicalism that took the form of heartfelt, honest identification with the German *volk*, (which resulted in exile for 13 years after 1849); his battle against the indifference and hostility of critics and jealous musicians; the ill health that plagued him; the inexorable courting of supporters and backers to finance his chosen, very expensive, art form; the reactions of superficial, appreciative audiences who could hum his tunes but fail to grasp the revolutionary significance and portent of his work – all of this he recounts with a mixture of Pharaonic disdain, resignation and exasperation.

Dickens and Wagner believed that great art could not speak for itself. In order to fully connect with the personality-obsessed, emotional audiences of the day, celebrities were required to engage in self-promotion and assiduous exposure management. Dickens relied upon his sympathetic confidante and biographer John Forster to present a winning image of him to the public. Wagner, and trusted cultural intermediaries like his supporter Theodor Uhlig, manipulated the press, notably the influential *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, as a vehicle of self-promotion. These writings took the form of expressing the courage, brilliance and innovation of his compositions in comparison with the feeble normative music in its midst. They are strategically placed to emblazon the pioneering character of his aesthetics and proclaim his status as a revolutionary artist.

Wagner was one of the most popular and controversial celebrities of the nineteenth century (Vazsonyi 2012). We remember him for his gusto, tyrannical outlook, scorn for Victorian mores, stunning reforms of theater, personal flamboyance (he had a fetish for exotic silks), anti-Semitism, arousal of primal emotions exemplified in his posthumous influence upon the “Bayreuth idealists,” and later by the Nazis (each of whom cherished and instrumentalized him for their own ends), as for his compositional brilliance, aesthetics and ground-breaking musical innovations with dissonance, polyphony and stagecraft. Wagner sees himself as occupying the loftiest

peaks of the avant-garde. Yet he mixes this up with an unapologetically popular dimension, in maintaining that his art can only be properly understood as the most complete expression of German spirit (Vazsonyi 2012: 52–4). “I am the most German of all,” he wrote in a diary entry of September 11, 1865. “I am the German spirit. Just look at the unparalleled magic of my works; compare them with all the others” (1975: 86). In positioning himself at the cutting edge, Wagner consciously places himself in a field of power in which he gambles that cultic attraction will be his due. Nietzsche calls Wagner “a magician” (Bauer 2005: 70) and a contemporary doyen of Wagner studies refers to him as “the sorcerer” (Millington 2012). There is no doubt that Wagner was a phenomenon and, like Dickens (“the inimitable”), was at pains to present himself as such.

Through his writings, generally commenting on the music scene and the associated fastidious rituals of musical consumption he recommended, notably (eventually) in the avocation of pilgrimage to Bayreuth as a precondition of the pure appreciation of his achievement, Wagner contrives to create an image of iconoclasm and exclusivity. The establishment of the music festival in Bayreuth was intended to be a permanent spatial monument not only to Wagner’s music, but also to his personality (Trippett 2011). His music, writings and relationships are products of deep emotional labor. In the same breath, he is determined to impress his genius upon the world, and to allow with (false) modesty that he is, when all is said and done, merely human and mortal. “For Wagner, everything is personal,” writes Vazsonyi (2012: 124). Yet like Dickens, who in his role as the Victorian *paterfamilias* was often distant and feared by his children, Wagner’s fulsome commitment to the personal privileges being recognized and respected by others over genuinely relating to their concrete needs and interests. It is hard to believe anything other than the first allegiance and interest of Wagner (and Dickens) was to themselves. Adorno’s (1981) account leaves the reader in no doubt that Wagner’s genius went hand in glove with a twisted, sadistic personality in which envy, sentimentality and destructiveness struggled to rule the day. Equally, Adorno (1981) continues by showing that Wagner’s artistic commitment to *Gesamtkunstwerk* (the total art work) was often used as an alibi to deflect attention from the Wagner industry’s attempt to commodify culture. Wagner’s musical impact required schooling the public, through episodes of self-promotion and grandiloquent claims of revolutionary genius. Only then would appreciation, receptivity and outright adulation follow.

Conclusion

By definition, to be an achieved celebrity is to be on the edge of ordinary social relations. The nineteenth-century development of the field of power in culture opened up many new possibilities for people hailing from ordinary backgrounds to accumulate attention capital. Through this, the age of achieved celebrity was born. Bourdieu’s (1996) famous study of Flaubert was one of the first to demonstrate that cultural autonomy is enmeshed with social production without positing, in the Hegelian

fashion, a master/servant relationship between the two. In his account neither autonomy nor production is assigned privilege. Rather his understanding of the relationship between the two is better described in terms of concepts like “inter-change” and “interplay.” The examples of Dickens and Wagner compare with Bourdieu’s analysis of Flaubert in supplying parallel examples of achieved celebrities that attain immense and continuing popularity in a field of power in which the relations between ascribed and achieved influence are undergoing tectonic change. But what does it mean to be “popular”?

In a classic discussion, notable for the manner in which originality and prescience is so skillfully condensed into enviable, cogent brevity, Raymond Williams (1976) began by noting that the origins of the term “popular” were in legal and political discourse and meant “belonging to the people.” He continues by noting that modern meanings are closer to being “well liked” or “widely favored.” As Williams points out, these modern meanings have an air of calculation about them inasmuch as they imply the deliberate currying of favor. It is this sense of calculation and currying favor that Bourdieu’s later concepts of “field of power” and “cultural intermediaries” (1984; 1996) are designed to encapsulate. In pushing back the barriers of ascribed celebrity in the nineteenth century the reelevated frontier of achieved celebrity allowed in networks of experts on the presentation of personality that quickly became decisive in the accumulation of attention capital. Turner (1920) conceptualized the new Prometheus and the new Canaan in terms of spatial conquest and property. In doing so he missed the seismic transformation of power and influence in favor of achieved celebrity that was occurring in the vertical cultural frontier transitions in the Old World. This transformation took the form of breeching the barriers of stratification and building the cult of personality.

Psychologically speaking, frontierism carries more than its fair share of pathological risks. Solar celebrity is anomic. Most of the old rules no longer apply and, at least to begin with, the new ones must be made up as you go along. To some extent, the examples of Dickens and Wagner can be usefully read as revealing something of the psychological costs of achieved celebrity. Bipolar disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, megalomania, paranoia and borderline personality disorder all have a statistically high correlation with fame and the yearning for fame (Rojek 2012: 35–57). Moreover, since it is in the nature of achieved celebrity to be emulated, they also reveal a little of the wider consequences of a social order in which, for the first time, achieved celebrity is ascendant (Pinsky and Young 2009).

Viewed from the perspective that property is the bedrock of character, the frontier of achieved celebrity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a matter of the annexation of land or control over business (through agglomeration or technological/managerial innovation). The frontier thesis posits the Westward push as a stage upon which the Western kinsman may rise to inspire the whole nation (Turner 1920). In the event, history shows that the fame economy has been more receptive to the accumulation of attention capital organized around self-promotion, exposure management and the strategic accumulation of attention capital. Here, the role of cultural intermediaries in the field of power is all. In the modern world fame is not primarily a matter of character, it is a matter of personality.

Notes

- 1 This is an idea first submitted by Ernest Gellner (1985) in the course of a very vigorous, charmingly unfair attack on the psychoanalytic movement. I knew Ernest very slightly. This contact, together with acquaintance with his writings leave me convinced that he was an extraordinary mind, whose bark was generally much worse than his bite.
- 2 The attendant career difficulties are well publicized and need no further comment here.
- 3 UNICEF was one of the first organizations to develop a systematic program of mining the accumulated capital of celebrities for humanitarian purposes.
- 4 Other examples are Ben Affleck's Eastern Congo Initiative; Demi Moore's campaign against human trafficking; Elton John's work against HIV/AIDS-related discrimination; Oprah Winfrey's contribution through the Oprah Winfrey Foundation; and Sean Penn's work for Haitian Relief.
- 5 Serious political disturbances and challenges were recorded in the Italian states, France, Denmark, the German states, Britain, Switzerland, Western Ukraine, Greater Poland, Belgium, Ireland, New Grenada, and Brazil.

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The Democratization of Celebrity

Mediatization, Promotion, and the Body

Olivier Driessens

One of the principal changes of celebrity in history has been its democratization, which implies the *relatively* increased potential for a person to become famous. Notwithstanding the stress on “relatively,” the democratization of celebrity remains a highly contested concept. Several criticisms have been raised about the idea that there has been or is an ongoing democratization of celebrity, so much so that even the use of this term has been contested. Graeme Turner (2006; see also his chapter in this volume), for instance, made a plea to adopt “demotic turn” instead of “democratization.” Others, among them Daniel Boorstin (1961), focused on what they perceived to be the negative consequences of this democratization. For them, the celebrity embodies and symbolizes the loss of value and meaning in mass media and modern media cultures. Still others, such as Sue Collins (2008), approached this debate from a political economy perspective and questioned the notion of democratization because of the exploitation of reality TV and DIY (do-it-yourself) celebrities by the media and celebrity industries, thus leaving no real opportunities for “ordinary” people to become famous (see also Driessens 2013: 646–7).

In this chapter, I present the debate on the democratization of celebrity in greater detail and from a historical perspective. In contrast with the chapters in Part One of this volume on the genealogy of celebrity, I will look at the bigger picture through a lens informed by theoretical developments in body studies and affect studies. This focus is complementary to the critical perspective and situates the changes in a broader framework, which enables to better situate and understand actual developments in celebrity cultures. At the same time, by subscribing to the view of the body as both material and immaterial and as processual instead of as a fixed subject or stable entity (Blackman 2012: 1), this chapter aims to offer a more nuanced reading of celebrity’s democratization. More specifically, celebrity is not thought of as a multitude of representations or as a discursive construct here, but as a body with a particular potential to affect particular audiences. My understanding

of affect aligns closely with Blackman (2012; Blackman and Venn 2010) who defined it as pre-individual, always mediated, consisting of “registers of experience which cannot be easily seen and which might variously be described as non-cognitive, trans-subjective, non-conscious, non-representational, incorporeal and immaterial” (2012: 4). These affects can be thought of as processes and they circulate between bodies. In that sense, “the celebrity is an embodied figure that needs to be *experienced*; ... one that requires a recognition of a level of intimacy or engagement that is not reducible to representation and performance. That is, to engage with the celebrity requires feelings, the activation of the senses, and the mobilization of affects” (Redmond 2014: 12). An extreme example of this would be celebrity sightings (Ferris 2004), where the planned presence or accidental appearance of a certain celebrity can strongly affect fans or anti-fans, and even those random unknowing bystanders who are affected by merely observing a strongly affected crowd.

Taken together, this leads to the argument developed in this chapter that against a general background of secularization and modernization the spectrum of possibilities to become a celebrity has relatively widened, while new technologies of attention simulate intimacy to exert affect, and intensified and globalized capitalism has increasingly commodified the celebrity body.

Three Layers of Democratization of Celebrity

As set out in the introduction, it is important to start looking at the bigger picture. This implies two aspects: first, we should contextualize the possible changes in celebrity’s attainability and (perceived) value at a more general level and from an international perspective. Second, it is imperative, I would suggest, that we base our analysis on a view that looks back much further into history than some authors have done (e.g., Turner 2006). We should look beyond the last decades that are marked by rapid and radical changes in areas such as technology, general welfare, consumerism, internationalization, mediatization and, within the media, tabloidization. Indeed, some of these changes can also be traced back to much earlier times. It will be argued, for instance, that through the history of fame and celebrity runs the history of changing and emerging representational and media technologies (see also Braudy 1986; Gamson 1992: 2). Additionally, changes such as the detraditionalization of society and rising individualization or secularization also need to be considered when discussing the democratization of celebrity (Rojek 2001; van Krieken 2012).

I will scrutinize the democratization of celebrity by dividing it into three main historical shifts or waves, each corresponding loosely with certain periods in time. It is crucial, however, that this temporal-thematic division cannot be interpreted in terms of strictly separated successive stages, since these are partly overlapping in time as well as all being still ongoing to lesser or greater extent. To make my point clear, we can think of royalty, for example. Whereas in some countries revolutions abruptly ended the reign of royal celebrity, in several other countries the undemocratic system of royalty still coexists with the more democratic kinds of stardom and celebrity. Also, while the royals are being praised and lauded by some people and media, at

the same time the royals' legitimacy and authority has been and still is a topic of incessant criticism and negotiation by others, most notably by republicans.

The three temporal-thematic subsections of the democratization of celebrity that I will discuss are as following: first, using Rojek's (2001; 2012) concepts, the shift from ascribed to achieved celebrity; second, the shift from achieved to attributed celebrity; and as a third shift I separate from the second the introduction and growing but often temporary popularity, both for the audiences and the celebrity and media industries, of reality TV and DIY celebrities.

Following this overview, a final nuance to this trichotomy should be added. By taking the shift from ascribed to achieved celebrity as a starting point, the impression might arise that this chapter ignores the history of fame and celebrity before the prevalence of ascribed celebrity. In other words, that the prominence of historical figures such as Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar would be overlooked. This is not at all the case: I take note of the fact that societies have always had their well-known individuals (see also Davis 2013: 113), but the discussion here predominantly concentrates on the democratization of celebrity and the different waves we might discern therein. For a more detailed account of celebrity's history, other sources can be consulted (e.g., Braudy 1986; Evans 2005; Inglis 2010; Mole 2009; van Krieken 2012; Morgan 2010).

From Ascribed to Achieved Celebrity

Rojek defined ascribed celebrity as a predetermined status position that one holds through family relationships and bloodline (2001: 17). Royalty is a typical example of this, but in a modern version, we could also think of certain celebrity kids, such as North West, the young daughter of one of the most visible celebrity couples, rapper Kanye West and reality TV phenomenon Kim Kardashian. Yet in this chapter ascribed celebrity is mainly understood as part of aristocratic and undemocratic societies, or "court societies" (van Krieken 2012: 19), in which a small circle largely controlled who was famous or not, who could be acknowledged for certain deeds or obedience or not. For example, through rituals such as knighting, the ruling class could confer additional symbolic capital (understood as recognition) to certain of its members or allow new members. During this period, a position of well-knownness was difficult to achieve without control of one's public representation and audience (Braudy 1986: 28). In other words, fame was largely limited to religious and political elites, "as the province of the top layer of a natural hierarchy" (Gamson 1992: 3). In fact, "in royal celebrity *two*, not one, hierarchies of social exclusion coincide. Royalty are exceptional by virtue of their position in both a social hierarchy and a media hierarchy" (Couldry 2001a: 224, emphasis in the original).

In the early days of royalty and in aristocracy more generally, there were many ways in which these hierarchies were produced and reproduced. These included different clothing and hairstyles (or wigs), the mystification of kings' bodies through divine touch ordering them to rule and govern, and the representation of these rituals and the rulers' faces through paintings and coins that materialized and multiplied

their body images. While these mediations brought the celebrity body closer to its consumers, it was generally distant and less visible through lack of rapid circulation by modern and visual media.

A number of institutional, economic, political, cultural and technological changes destabilized the aristocratic model of fame, however. For instance, Braudy noted that during the English Civil War of the 1640s, “both monarchy and the hierarchy it supported had become open to political question” (1986: 319). The reason for this is that the king was seen to act against his own people, which changed the nature of the state and the way in which one could achieve celebrity. Braudy added that during the seventeenth century, as well, theater became increasingly important for the self-portrayal of public men and for people’s perception of social order and hierarchy. Shakespeare’s different plays on kings are a typical example of the fact that the king became the topic of theater and thus “the object of an audience’s gaze” (Braudy 1986: 319). It also showed that being a king could be acted, “making problematic the distinction between the social role and the real human occupying it” (van Krieken 2012: 34).

Also, with the broadening of access to arts and to means of representation such as portraiture, printing or engraving, prominence was no longer the exclusive privilege of the aristocracy. As such, we could say that fame was democratized but also individualized to a certain extent: no longer strictly determined by class position, but more strongly linked to the “deserving individual” (Gamson 1992: 3; see also Littler 2004). According to van Krieken, “The idea of celebrity is by definition individualistic. ... Celebrity and individualism are joined at the hip, and process[es] of individualization and celebritization can be seen as interdependent, mutual indexes of each other” (2012: 24). This corresponds with P. David Marshall’s earlier argument that “celebrity status operates at the very center of the culture as it resonates with conceptions of individuality that are the ideological ground of Western culture.” He goes on to say that celebrities embody and celebrate the “twinning discourses of modernity: democracy and capitalism” (Marshall 1997: x, 4).

The meritocratic system was further reinforced by industrialization. The abolition of monarchies, secularization, new printing methods and the growth of urban and literate populations made self-promotion and the authorship of one’s own prominence easier (Braudy 1986: 13). However, these changes in celebrity in the broader context of detraditionalization brought the need for the standards of achievement to be redefined. As a result, “The history of fame is also the history of the shifting definition of achievement in a social world” (Braudy 1986: 7, 10). In Western societies, these standards are ambiguously constructed, based, on the one hand, on “Roman and classical ideals of public service, civic virtue, and national glory and, on the other ... Judeo-Christian ideals of humbleness, modesty, spirituality, and private virtue” (Braudy 1986: 10).

The history of fame is not only the history of the evolving definitions of achievement, it is also the history of the changing ways of becoming visible and getting attention through the use of new means of representation and communication – in other words, putting at the center the body of the celebrity (Holmes and Redmond 2006a: 122). The Renaissance added to the historical ways of reproducing

one's image – theater, literature, and public monuments – media such as engraved portraits and painting. With modernity came photography, radio, film, and television (Braudy 1986: 3). In sum, several authors seem to agree on the central role of media in the evolution of fame and celebrity. For example, according to Gollapudi, “At any historical moment, the nature of the mass media available determines the contours of celebrity culture” (2012: 56). Or in the words of Braudy: “As each new medium of fame appears, the human image it conveys is intensified and the number of individuals celebrated expands” (1986: 3).

Do these authors fall prey to technological determinism or media centralism with these statements? Not necessarily, in my view. Rather, it shows how the democratization of celebrity is inextricably linked with the “mediatization of fame.” Mediatization is not simply about something previously “unmediated” being mediated, but it points toward the increasing intensity of mediation and it stresses the interaction between media-communicative changes and social and cultural changes. For example, here Braudy accentuated the quantitative dimensions of mediatization (the increase in the number of celebrities) as well as its qualitative dimensions (intensification of the mediated representation of people and the potential to affect the consumers of celebrity images).

From Achieved to Attributed Celebrity

A second step in the democratization of celebrity is the way that through further professionalization of promotion and communication, together with a rise of available media platforms, access to celebrityhood was broadened to those people who could use these means best – or who had others at their service doing this for them. For example, through the strategic use of public relations and advertising, film studios drenched ordinary bodies in glamour and turned them into stars before they had even appeared in a movie. In the words of Cashmore: “A peculiarity of celebrity culture is the shift of emphasis from achievement-based fame to media-driven renown” (2006: 7). However, a common mistake made by those praising heroes and the famous for their talents and achievements, while dismissing celebrities because of their mere media-fabricated well-knownness (e.g., Boorstin 1961), is that they (largely) ignore the role of communication and promotion in establishing the reputation of the former (Gabler 2001: 2). “It is the nature of ‘heroism’ that it be communicated to a public, and there will always be some technique to how the available media are used to that effect” (van Krieken 2012: 6). Indeed, historical figures, too, used image-building techniques and self-promotional strategies. Military leader George Washington exploited his fame to become president of the United States (West and Orman 2003), just as literary authors such as Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde promoted their work and themselves through the lecture circuit (Davis 2013: 113).

Ignoring the role of communication and promotion in the establishment of heroes’ and stars’ reputations is part of the “myth that fame was a natural cream-rising-to-the-top phenomenon” (Gamson 1992: 2). A possible explanation for the

strong belief in this myth is that the publicity and promotional machinery behind it was kept largely out of the sight of audiences. This (in)visibility and the changes it underwent can be perfectly illustrated by looking at the history of the film industry and star-making (deCordova 2001; Gamson 1992; McDonald 2000; Gledhill 1991; Dyer 1979). Needless to say, this history is more complex than the short summary presented here suggests, focusing on the changing visibility of the promotional industries in the making of stars.

In the early days of cinema, no star system was established. Moreover, stars were not yet necessary: during this period, the technological possibilities of showing moving images were cinema's primary attraction for the audience. Less attention was paid to the narrative qualities of the film or to the still anonymous bodies on the screen (McDonald 2000: 20). Around the turn of the twentieth century, change was underway, however. According to McDonald, three elements stimulated the development of stardom in American cinema (2000: 23). First, the production of films became much more professionalized and industrialized, with the labor process being split up among specialists, giving the actors a different status. The second element was the increasing importance of the narrative in films and consequently changes in the production. Third, details about the identities of the on-screen bodies started to be actively disseminated as a promotional tool.

This last aspect deserves extra attention. It is well-known that at first producers were reluctant for actors to cease to be anonymous, because they were afraid that it would give them a stronger position in contract negotiations (see, e.g., deCordova 2001). However, what is equally important is that, to start with, actors also preferred to remain anonymous since acting on the screen was still considered inferior to working in theater. This changed from around 1907. Narratively more complex films were shot and actors could be offered more regular work (McDonald 2000: 24–5). The film press began to review not only the film as such, but also the performance of the individual actors. A few years later, the press also started reporting on the film stars' offscreen lives, which brought the real breakthrough of the star system, according to deCordova (2001).

With these arguments, both deCordova (2001) and McDonald (2000) have rejected a frequently given explanation for the start of the star system in American cinema. As the story goes, in an attempt to attack the powerful position of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), a trust of the main film companies, independent producer Carl Laemmle contracted actress Florence Lawrence to his company in 1910. To promote her transfer from Biograph – which was part of MPPC – to his Independent Motion Picture (IMP) Corporation, he initiated a publicity stunt by spreading the fake rumor that Florence Lawrence had been killed in a car accident. Soon after, Laemmle advertised in newspapers that this story was false and that his “IMP-Girl” (formerly known as “The Biograph Girl”) would feature in the forthcoming movie *The Broken Oath*.

The star system was institutionalized in the film industry and until around the 1950s it was quite stable, with many stars bound to the production companies by long-term contracts. The publicity offices of the film studios intensely crafted the stars' bodies and images, typically by merging the on-screen and offscreen personas

of the stars. It was important that for the public the stars' images and bodies seemed not to be manufactured by an ensemble of publicity agents. The dominant discourse at that time was that these stars had a natural charisma, a great talent, or were gifted with an extraordinary star quality that was discovered by the studios, who merely delivered it to the public (Gamson 1992: 5–7).

However, the myth that the gifted and deserving were naturally rising to the top became increasingly threatened when the publicity machinery became more visible to the audiences. The tightly controlled star system was destabilized through such factors as the introduction and popularity of television, an increase in the number of celebrities, and the breakdown of the vertically integrated studio system (Gamson 1992; McDonald 2000). Instead of long-term contracts, film actors and actresses now worked on a freelance basis, which gave talent scouts and managers a more important role. Stars were now also more in control of their own image (Gamson 1992). As a consequence, the audience was invited to have a look at the (constructed) private lives of the meritocratic stars, giving the audience the impression that the publicity machinery was in their control. However, this created suspicion, since the audience noticed this construction (Gamson 1992). This led to a new step in the representation of stars and the creation of affect by showing also the image production, inviting the audience in as “cynical insiders to the publicity game” (Gamson 1992: 2). This entered a new phase with the advent of the paparazzi (Murray 2013).

This short summary clarifies that the distinction often made between achieved celebrity, or fame based on achievements and talent, and attributed celebrity, or celebrity as a result of mere media attention, hides a reality that is much more fluid and ambiguous and in both cases involves commodification. “Achieved celebrities” are to some extent also “attributed celebrities,” while obviously many “attributed celebrities” also have their talents – to begin with, the ability to keep up their performance as celebrities. The overview also demonstrates that in the case of cinema, promotion and publicity have indeed gained more importance and a more central role in the creation, management and commercial exploitation of the stars' public image and bodies. It could be said that this applies to other entertainment and nonentertainment fields as well. For example, in sports, cultural intermediaries have similarly come to play a central role. We can observe that talent and achievement go hand in hand with branding and product endorsements (Rojek 2006: 685). Combined, they contribute to the image of the sports star. A clear example of this was former tennis player Anna Kournikova: although she never won a singles title in a Women's Tennis Association tournament, she was one of the key women tennis players for years – at least in the press and on the internet, through her glamorous appearance, stories on her private life and her many commercial partnerships.

One of the consequences of being part of the media and commercial circuits is that for many celebrities their careers in the spotlight have become much shorter, certainly today. Through the intense media coverage and consumption, it is a challenge to keep the media and the audience interested for longer periods of time. For instance, in Japan, with its very intense media and celebrity cultures, the careers of idols usually last no longer than three years. When these careers end, new idols are already in place to be launched, which has created an inherent dynamic of constant

renewal together with a constant desire for novelty (Galbraith and Karlin 2012: 16–17). A more extreme form of this renewal and of short-lived media careers has been described by Rojek with the expression “celetoid” (2001; 2012). Celetoid is

the term for any form of compressed, concentrated, attributed celebrity. I distinguish celetoids from celebrities because, generally, the latter enjoy a more durable career with the public. ... Celetoids are the accessories of cultures organized around mass communications and staged authenticity. Examples include lottery winners, one-hit wonders, stalkers ... and the various other social types who command media attention one day, and are forgotten the next. (Rojek 2001: 20–1)

Celebrity types that would also fit this category of celetoids are many of the figures produced through reality TV and the internet, among which YouTube and Instagram. This is the topic of the next paragraph.

Enter Reality TV and DIY-Celebrity

A next stage in the democratization of celebrity after the shift from undemocratic ascribed celebrity to more democratic forms of achieved celebrity, and the further broadening of celebrityhood with those who have especially attributed celebrity, has been the introduction of reality TV and DIY celebrities, now also called “micro-celebrities” (Marwick 2013). Micro-celebrities are people with internet fame, or people whose fame is built on online affective labor. Very often these are “ordinary” people or professionals who gather a significant following on social media such as YouTube, Twitter or Instagram. Examples of micro-celebrities are bloggers, YouTubers, camgirls, but also CEOs or programmers. They perform as celebrities and try to sustain their popularity by engaging with their audiences as online personas.

In essence, this is about “ordinary” people who join the competition to escape the ordinary world and become “media people” (see Couldry 2003). The gap between the ordinary world and the media world should not be underestimated, according to Couldry (2001b; 2003). Our overvaluation of the media as our society’s center, together with our undervaluation of the ordinary as a source of meaning, can create “injuries”: “an injury connected with the pervasive misrecognition of everyday life as ‘merely’ ordinary (not, that is, touched by the ‘glamour’ of mediation)” (2001b: 161). Hence, by showing us the ritual transition from ordinary to celebrity, TV programs such as *Big Brother* symbolically reinforce rather than close the gap between both worlds (2001b: 172).

Of course, there is nothing really new about “ordinary” bodies being discovered and turned into celebrity bodies. In cinema and music, for instance, it has always been part of the industry. However, what is different now is that this happens on a much larger scale, in more intense ways (Turner 2006: 154–5), and not necessarily under the supervision of professionals. Especially since the introduction of *Big Brother*, television program schedules are full of reality TV shows that introduce us to new celetoids. Also, the internet has added new ways to elevate oneself from the

masses and gain more attention. This “domestic system of fame” (Rojek 2012: 10) enables people to be discovered and to acquire a fan base without the initial professional support by cultural intermediaries. However, these are still necessary when DIY celebrities want to prolong their career in the spotlight, which often leads to co-option by the industry. Typical examples are Justin Bieber and the Arctic Monkeys (Rojek 2012: 33). They initially gathered fame on social network sites, which eventually led to contracts with major labels that further launched their careers.

Following the earlier steps to give the audiences a small glimpse behind the scenes into the star’s making, in this phase the curtains have fallen completely. Instead of the well-dressed and carefully manicured “heavenly body” (Dyer 2004) of the star, we can now have a look at another naked *Big Brother* participant taking a shower, or a previously anonymous man with weight problems getting a makeover on television. The “celebrity” body could not be more ordinary, exposed and deglamorized here (see also Holmes and Redmond 2006a: 122–3).

The fact that celetoids from reality TV sometimes manage to establish a durable media career, which was the case for *Big Brother* inhabitant Jade Goody in the UK, for example, led Rojek to review his initial conceptualization of the celetoid (2012: 165). In his recent work he has suggested that we could make a distinction between “short-life celetoid” and “long-life celetoid.” The former is the celetoid as defined above, a person who enjoys only a very short attention span from the audience. The long-life celetoid then is equally “devoid of perceptible talents and disciplined accomplishments” (Rojek 2012: 165), but manages to stretch his or her fame in time. However, even though Rojek has a point in that celetoids sometimes can remain famous for a longer period of time, I see little usefulness in this new categorization. Since the essential characteristic of the notion “celetoid” is exactly its limited time frame, in my view it is better to conceive of the celetoid who survives this limitation as a celetoid who turns into a celebrity. In other words, “long-life celetoid” is in my view a contradiction in terms.

As already mentioned, Turner has not been convinced that this increasing prominence and rising to the surface of “ordinary” people in the media should be linked with democratization (2004; 2006; 2010). For him, diversity does not equal democracy. Turner sees no natural link between broadened access to the media and a democratic politics. Moreover, the media are only acting for their own benefit, rather than providing the marginalized with the recognition to be represented (Turner 2004: 83). This argument has been supported by Rojek (2012: 163) and Biressi and Nunn (2008), who observe that participants in reality TV are often represented as “failed” or “bad” citizens: for example, in lifestyle shows people are shown to be unable to live properly, and in talent contests many participants are depicted as talentless and losers.

Instead of democratization or democratainment, Turner proposed the term “demotic turn” (2004). This concept signals “the increasing visibility of the ‘ordinary person’ as they turn themselves into media content through celebrity culture, reality TV, DIY websites, talk radio and the like ... as well as celebrity’s colonization of the expectations of everyday life in contemporary western societies, particularly among teenagers and young adults” (2006: 153). It is important to critically

discuss the implications of this proposition for my own use of the term “democratization” and ask the question whether this term should not be replaced by another one given the criticisms just mentioned. Four points should be noted on this matter. First, I am sympathetic to Turner’s claim that celebrity has been and still is changing, which is also why democratization has been singled out as one of the ways we can observe celebritization (see Driessens 2013). As Turner described it: “celebrity itself [is] mutating: no longer a magical condition, some research suggests that it is fast becoming an almost reasonable expectation for us to have of our everyday lives” (2006: 156). Indeed, as has been stressed throughout this chapter, celebrity is no longer restricted to certain elites, but is more open and in that sense more, but not absolutely, democratic nowadays – and for as long as it lasts.

Hence, and second, I also agree that democratization should be approached critically. We should not ignore the fact that the careers of celestoids are very short and that usually they are exploited by the media and celebrity industries, who are still in control in political-economic and in legal terms. We should also not forget that most reality TV participants or DIY celebrities have no real chance of starting a serious media career, for example because their public persona is strictly bound to and defined by the reality show that has put them into the limelight – a show that a few months later will already presents us with a new load of wannabe-famous candidates (Turner 2006: 155). Moreover, it needs to be stressed that most people’s chances of celebrity are in fact largely nonexistent (Stevenson 2005). While many of us would never want to participate in any reality TV program, many others would never be picked from the overload of candidates, or would not be given any attention even if they survived an initial selection round. In other words, opening the gates for more “ordinary” people to have a glimpse of celebrity does not imply that there is equality of opportunity (Holmes and Redmond 2006b: 14) – but this is by no means how the use of democratization is intended here.

Thirdly, and here I want to make an important differentiation from Turner: in his view, democratization and the increasing incorporation of “ordinary” people into the production of celebrity culture is understood, in terms of politics, as the *democratic functions* of celebrity and the ordinary. This is very clear, for example, when he discusses Hartley’s (1999) democratainment thesis and distances himself from what he considers to be too optimistic an appraisal of the democratic potential of entertainment television and popular culture for informing a kind of DIY citizenship (Turner 2004: 78–82).¹ In this chapter, democratization does not refer to this democratic and political potential. What it does mean is that celebrity has changed from a status position that was largely prescribed for certain elites to something that could be achieved by the many and that could also be attributed to those selected by the celebrity industries. In the last phase, this selection procedure has also been opened up to more “ordinary” people who can, through self-promotion on the internet, for example, take a first (and sometimes decisive) step toward being well-known. In other words, the democratization of celebrity is the democratization of visibility – and again, relatively. In that sense, I see little reason to refrain from the use of the term democratization.

A final point that could be added is that when we look back at the broad historical overview and the different shifts in the democratization of celebrity presented here, there is another current running through it, namely the increasing importance and empowerment of the public. Certainly in court societies, for example, it could be said that this closed and quite strictly controlled system of celebrity left little space for “the public” to make or break the careers of their public figures. In addition, the beginning of the star system was very much controlled by the industry, whereas later, following rising consumerism and changing communication practices in relation to celebrity (for example through the introduction of paparazzi styles of journalism), the public moved further toward the center of the celebrity apparatus. In some reality TV shows the public even pushes the “yes” or “no” button: candidate X will progress to the next stage of the show and can continue the pursuit of celebrity, whereas televoting has decided that candidate Y has to leave the show immediately and return to anonymity. Here, the making or breaking of aspirant celebrities by the public could not be more direct and visible.

Now, through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the public can also directly follow and increasingly interact with their favorite celebrities. Through this (illusion of) public intimacy (Thrift 2008: 12), celebrity bodies get closer to us once again: para-social interaction is replaced by social interaction (although often it is merely one-way communication since not all celebrities reply to messages by members of the audience), and the mediation of affect thus becomes more direct. However, is this completely new? Yes and no. Yes, because it adds new layers of interactivity and possibilities of directness on a scale that was previously unseen; no, because in the very early stages of celebrity, as well, people tried to get close to their heroes and celebrities through communication or bodily contact. One example is the worshipping of relics (pieces of cloth or hair from notorious or celebrated individuals), which is in fact not really different from current fan practices such as collecting the set list or guitar picks of favorite bands, or authors’ autographs, or mimicking celebrities’ hair or clothing styles, among all kinds of consumption practices (Holmes and Redmond 2006a: 122; Redmond 2014: 29–30).

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to nuance and discuss from a more historical perspective the democratization of celebrity, thereby paying attention to the celebrity body and the shifts in its conceptions. The discussion on the democratization of celebrity has taken an earlier starting point than certain other studies and it has been subdivided into three temporal-thematic sections. These are the shift from ascribed to achieved celebrity, from achieved to attributed celebrity, and finally the emergence of reality TV and DIY celebrities. As has been emphasized, these shifts should not be seen as strictly successive temporal stages, but as partly overlapping and sometimes still ongoing shifts in the relative importance of particular kinds of celebrity. These shifts then together point at the relative widening of access to becoming (but not necessarily remaining) well known to wider parts of the population, together with a

seemingly growing power on the part of the audiences to make and break celebrities. Members previously known as the audience can more easily become a celestoid, and maybe celebrity as well, for instance by initially bypassing the traditional gatekeepers of celebrity cultures and their industries through the use of YouTube, blogs and other internet platforms.

In these shifts, we have seen that the private lives of celebrities have taken center stage, including displays of naked, “less than perfect” bodies in order to win the battle for attention that can never be fully won. Throughout the democratization of celebrity, the aristocratic and royal body that was differentiated through hierarchy or family ties, dress and style, became displaced by the often carefully manufactured bodies of the “deserving” stars and glamorous celebrities, such as politicians, fashion models, film stars, musicians, and authors. With the expansion of technologies of attention, especially social media, the democratization of celebrity got a new breath. The celebrity body became again more “ordinary” and affect in this case more a matter of similarity than of difference, although the mere being in the media of celestoids and celebrities continues to reproduce the myth of the mediated center and its resultant hierarchies, thus maintaining dissimilarity and extraordinariness.

Many of the criticisms regarding the relative democratization of celebrity have been acknowledged. Still, based on the observed long-term historical shifts, it has been argued that we should stick to the term democratization and not replace it by alternatives such as “demotic turn.” Whereas demotic turn might also be correct in signaling the recent changes in celebrity culture (DIY and reality TV), my view is that democratization better summarizes the long-term changes we are witnessing. Also, the word itself, by ending with -ization, clearly marks an *ongoing* process, something that is not finished. In contrast, a demotic “turn” is stronger and more outspoken than democratization because it implies a fully established fact. Given the profound changes in media technologies and practices, sociological configurations and cultural trends that we are witnessing, we should leave open the possibility for yet another successive temporal-thematic stage in the democratization of celebrity.

Notes

- 1 See also L. van Zoonen, who argued that fan communities and political constituencies are very similar in certain respects. Television and participatory reality TV formats such as *Big Brother* and *Pop Idol* may foster the “emotional constitution of electorates which involves the development and maintenance of affective bonds between voters, candidates and parties” (2004: 49).

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Sensing Celebrities

Sean Redmond

Open Your Eyes

Drawing upon your other senses to imagine that your favorite celebrity is stood before you, *close your eyes for a moment*. As you do so, try to experience them as a body, a surface, and as sound. Sense your celebrity as a series of enveloping textures. Smell their perfume or eau de cologne. Hear their voice as a synesthetic register; not just composed of sound but of color, taste, and light. Now employ your closed eyes as if they are organs of touch; feeling these textures and becoming immersed in their texturality. Experience your celebrity as a cross-modal encounter. Hear their footsteps or movements on the floor in front of you. Become aware of the enchanted weight of your own body at the same time; feel your delight, revel in the changes in your physiology, as the celebrity materializes before and within you.

One can sense celebrities into carnal existence, and while representation may often shape the way they are encountered, senses and sensation are not simply irreducible to semiotic signs, discourse, and ideology (Redmond 2014). The senses can be wilder, freer, more intense and transgressive than that (Massumi 1995). In fact, I contend that celebrity culture is one of the defining spaces for heightened experiential encounters, and for the circulation and transmission of intense affects that are often empowered and empowering. They are part of the “distribution of the sensible” but in ways that can challenge the “police order” (Rancière 2004), and as I will go on to argue, they can enact and embody ribald instances of the contemporary Bakhtinian carnival.

Open your eyes

In this chapter I will explore celebrity through the lens of sensory aesthetics. My position will be that instead of simply understanding celebrities as artificial mythic

constructions and conduits of commodification, or as neoliberal bodies made in the service of liquid modernity and late capitalism – as a great deal of the literature suggests (Cashmore 2006; Rojek 2012) – one can and should make sense of them as certain types of experiences; composed of and involved in circulating clusters of affects and intensities.

To make my case I will begin by defining sensory aesthetics, linking it to the phenomenology of celebrity, and particularly the work of Vivian Sobchack (2004; 2000) and Laura U. Marks (2000). I will draw upon the unique concept of the *celebaesthetic* subject to address what I see as the intersubjective relationship between fan and celebrity (Redmond 2014). I will then undertake a sense-based textual analysis of one contemporary celebrity – American TV, film and pop star Miley Cyrus – in terms of the way she embodies and sensorializes a heightened form of being-in-the-world. Using Miley as a case study will also allow me to draw into the analysis the issue of gender and race, and the way conductive “skin” can be made to function as a sensory stereotype. However, I will also argue that the poetics of celebrity skin can act as a way of liberating the body from its conditioned docility (Foucault 1990).

Sense and Sensation

Terry Eagleton has suggested that “aesthetics are born as a discourse of the body,” and that, “In its original formulation by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, the term refers not in the first place to art, but, as the Greek *aisthesis* would suggest, to the whole region of human perception and sensation, in contrast to the more rarefied domain of conceptual thought.” Aesthetics represents the “first stirrings of a primitive materialism – of the body’s long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical” (1990: 13). Aesthetics, in this context, is carnal appreciation, albeit set against the higher order forms of the linguistic. It contains a heady mixture of uncultured responses and affects, including delight, desire, and disgust. The senses, as Susan Buck-Morss argues (1992), maintain an uncivilized and uncivilizable trace, a core of resistance to cultural domestication and discursive positioning. This is not to devalue them, of course, but to see their potential as unregulated forces that are not simply placed within discourse but outside of it, with radical embodied possibility.

I suggest that sensory aesthetics and sensuous knowledge have the potential for the radicalization of the body, or a type of liminal becoming that frees one’s flesh from its cultural docility and ideological entrapment. That is to say, while we are “trained” and “regulated” to take up certain identity positions and inhabit them (Foucault 1977; Young 1990), our bodies do also experience the world through carnal appreciation, which can in turn lead to a radical form of resistant embodiment. As Vivian Sobchack puts it, “our bodies escape” the cultural and ideological conditions in which they are produced (Bukatman 2009).

This production of a radicalized sensory aesthetics can be best understood to be a cluster of affects or bloc of sensations (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) waiting to be born. These intense affects are free of language and emerge out of the unregulated

sensorium of the individual. As Simon O'Sullivan argues: "Affects are ... the molecular beneath the molar. The molecular understood here as life's, and art's, intensive quality, as the stuff that goes on beneath, beyond, even parallel to signification" (2001: 126).

As I have argued elsewhere (Redmond 2006; 2011; 2014), celebrities are first and foremost embodied individuals, intense molecular manifestations, and one of the key ways they affectively engage with fans and audiences is through the primary senses activated by sensorial-based aesthetics. This is not, however, a one-way mode of communication: these molecular manifestations occupy and move between celebrity and fan. I have begun to define this celebrity/fan relationship as *celebaesthetic* or one in which the individual and famous person face one another as experiential beings in a dynamic, relational structure of reversibility and reciprocity. Feelings and (their) affects move backwards and forwards, in and out, within and without the two identifying figures. There is a systolic/diastolic rhythm about these exchanges producing an intensification of bodily awareness, singular and combined. In this relational, cross-modal exchange through which the senses are activated, the body is the organ through which a communion – a shared experiential relationship – takes place. This exchange relies on "both synesthesia (or intersensoriality) and coenaesthesia (the perception of a person's whole sensorial being)" (Sobchack 2004: 67). Put rather simply, celebrities and fans communicate with one another in and through the activation of powerful emotions and senses; shared, heightened and proximate embodied awareness; and intense molecular manifestations that fill the body full of rapture and delight.

Celebrity Aesthetics: Part One

For example, the skin, hair, lips, voice, eyes, touch, sweat, movement, arms, legs, muscles, breasts, and torso of the celebrity are intensively aestheticized by the media and intensely focused upon by fans. One clear example of this is the close-up of the celebrity's face that registers as a particularly strong affection-image, as "immobile unity" combined with "intense expressive movements" (Deleuze 2005). For Deleuze, "The face is this organ-carrying plate of nerves which has sacrificed most of its global mobility and which gathers or expresses in a free way all kinds of tiny local movements which the rest of the body usually keeps hidden" (2005: 90). If one was to take the cluster of close-up shots of Philip Seymour Hoffman in February 2014, it can be argued they registered as dramatic entry points to the depression, brilliance and loneliness that marked his acting, his private life, and which affectively confirmed the tragedy of his death in that month. Immobile unity is particularly affecting in this case because it is a face that will now only ever be able to express in images and footage recorded before his death, a *still* past tense made intensely present.

Of course, the cultural or media context for sensing a close-up of a celebrity is that there is already *written* into the image something to be seen, felt, and to be affected by. The celebrity close-up is mobilized within an emotional economy, and is produced and circulated by the marketing and the promotions industry to make

celebrities appear authentic, accessible, and in touch with the person viewing the image (Holmes 2005; Rojek 2001). For example, gossip magazines, celebrity blog sites, and entertainment channels readily employ the close-up of the celebrity to affectively signify what emotional and physical state they are presently in. While these intensified close-ups can of course be “read” as artificial, promotional constructs, set within a commodity-driven marketplace, I would like to argue that there is, nonetheless, very often a “surplus” of affect at work. Surplus affect here refers to those vibrations that cannot be fully recuperated or used up by language and signifying systems.

It is not just that in general terms the celebrity’s face leaks its phenomenological truth, but in the tight and proximate orbit of the close-up a singular and startling of-this-moment truth is being revealed. These close-ups can be classified as an “affection image” which achieves the direct power of the “entity” being brought into sensation. In these affecting close-ups, the “micro movements” of the face reveal the emotional interiority of celebrity, whether this be guilt, love, remorse, heartache, or desire. More prosaically, we can *sense* these close-ups as an actualization of the celebrity’s being-in-the-world, which simultaneously impresses upon our own embodied self as we come into embodied contact with the emoting face set before us.

It is important to note here that the affecting intensity that is set in motion is not just generalizable, where fans and consumers are seen to be sharing the same affective response, like easily duped and seduced herds carried by the ideology of intimacy (Nunn and Biressi 2010). Rather, and to draw on Barthes, the close-up may directly “wound me,” serve as the punctum, or “that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me), is poignant to me” (1982: 26–7). What we will often find in the close-up that affects us so is personal, autobiographical, and connected to our lived history. Much of this sits beneath consciousness, housed in the realms of intensified feeling. We are all wounded differently. To return to the close-ups circulated of Philip Seymour Hoffman after his death, they had a particular powerful affect on me because I felt in his face and sensed in his eyes my own anguish and battle with depression – his face became my face in a sensorial chain of recognition and mis-recognition (Redmond forthcoming).

I want to argue, then, that to properly understand the way celebrities make sense-based meaning, one also needs then to take into consideration the role of autoethnography in the way the consumer/fan engages with famous people (see Holmes et al. 2015). My particular use of autoethnography is one in which the lived stories we tell are always charged with the heat and impression of the encounter in which they were first forged. Sensing celebrities is always uniquely personal.

Celebrity Aesthetics: Part Two

Celebrities are of course also made molecular through the way they are placed within richly evocative settings, and given narrative and performative choices that bring them into heightened experiential contact with the world. Lighting and styling design, color and fabric choice, furniture placement, transportation and objects that

are endowed with heightened sensuous power such as limousines, perfume bottles, fur, food types, all render the celebrity flesh as that which is surrounded by and intimately connected to a sensorially intense material culture.

These materials of the celebrity-inspired world are further endowed by the way they are often staged in heightened, utopian environments that are full of energy, life, abundance, color and beauty (Kellner 2003). The Oscars is, of course, one instance when all the embodied and textural registers are in play. From the red carpet entrance, to the close-up shots on ecstatic celebrity faces and waiting, adoring fans, an enchanted sensorial world is established that simultaneously pours (back) into one's entire sensorium. Advertising campaigns clearly work in this way too, operating along a register of sensorial value transference, where the celebrity-endorsed product is suggested to enchant the person who purchases it and incorporates it into their everyday life (Cashmore 2010).

In the 2013 Miss Dior "La vie en rose" advertising campaign 2013, Natalie Portman is captured in a series of heightened Paris-inspired backdrops, with elemental, natural and haute couture brought together in an irresistible *mise-en-scène* of desire. Water, sunlight, blossom, flower, bouquet, are brought into the world of opulent apartments and summer houses, long drives in open sports cars, and romantic embraces and dreamy kisses. This is a world crafted out of primal and primary sensory experiences and Portman is the carnal embodiment of what her celebrity image and the perfume will bring to your life if you consume them both together.

One can conceive of these sensory relations in terms of what Laura U. Marks has defined as haptic visuality, where "the eyes themselves function like organs of touch" and "move over the surface of their object rather than plunge into illusionist depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture" (2000: 162). For Marks, film and video may be "thought of as impressionable and conductive, like skin" (2000: xi–xii) and their visual landscapes can be heightened through the way they utilize sensory-based activity, and "sensuous imagery that evokes memory of the senses" (Totaro 2002). While Marks argues that visual sensoriality is found in experimental film and video, it is clear to me that the tactile vision of the celebrity works in similar ways (Redmond 2014).

To return to the Portman video for Dior, the camera that captures her joy, in this love-struck Parisian summer, is often placed close to her body, or her body moves toward it in delicate movements of transition, opening, and desiring glances. It is clear that this is a point-of-view shot (of her lover, or of an omnipotent camera that can narrate this journey in close and proximate detail for us). The advert begins with a close-up of her face, side on, smelling a pink rose that she moves across her cheek to her mouth, so close one can smell its/her bouquet in that synesthetic relationship through which the senses operate. Portman dances in a waterfall, swims toward the camera, falls into a floating sea of pink roses, and her and her lover's face at different points are captured in fine, grainy black-and-white detail. The advert is sensuous and evokes the memory of sensation and erotic feeling. Portman's skin and the conductive qualities of the capturing camera *breathe* through one another. Portman's celebrity image is conducive to such haptic visuality because it is built on roles and performances that affectively position her as the embodiment of natural, floral

beauty. The vibrant pink that runs through the advert also runs across the carnal textures of her celebrity image. Hers is a skin of a very particular quality, set within a feminine discourse, and is particularly both contemporary and yet recalls a Paris long gone.

Sensing Time, Skin and Race

Such moments and situations of celebrity abundance can and should be placed in particular historical and political contexts. Not only do audiences respond to celebrities differently depending on a whole set of personal, memorial and psychological circumstances, but the experience of the celebrity is culturally and historically specific. For example, Marilyn Monroe sensorially transmitted what it was like to be a perfected white woman in a 1950s America dealing with racial difference, and growing female independence (Dyer 1987). Monroe created the somewhat contradictory “experience” of desirable white womanhood for an America undergoing radical social and political transformation. Her body moved freely, it registered as soft and appealing, the embodiment of girl-like optimism and white womanly sensuality. It was full and fecund, but vulnerable and fragile, always in corporeal tension with itself (Cohen 1998). Monroe was cotton and silk, a voluptuous body, and yet she inhabited space like she was a little girl in awe of what she saw and was confronted by (Young 1990). Her smile was often captured in a close-up, an affect image, and she readily, sometimes knowingly, drew attention to her body through the way she moved it through space, touched it, and let it “escape” its borders and boundaries.

There is that word again, “escape.” I would suggest that those women who would be found identifying with Monroe would be doing so as celebaesthetic beings; sensing her as they sense themselves in a carnal exchange not reducible to words, not accountable simply to the operations of bourgeois capitalism or patriarchal discourse. While this liberation of the senses maybe short-lived, may ultimately be recuperated in the services of patriarchy and consumption, there are always moments in time and space where the body is free, and delirious affects escape.

Nonetheless, through the Monroe example one can immediately see how sensing celebrities also occupies complex experiential and ideological terrains. From a critical position, set within racist or radicalized discursive formations, it is easy to see that Monroe celebrated a type of white womanhood (Dyer 1987), and how the Portman advertising campaign locates feminine beauty in white idealization. The celebrity body can materialize as an intense sensory stereotype, where it is positioned to emit difference through the very pores of its corporeality. As Coleman-Bell has argued, the tennis player Serena Williams has become a modern version of the vivacious nineteenth-century Hottentot Venus who was identified and identifiable as embodying an innate sexual difference (enlarged labia, buttocks) from white women. She writes,

The “famous” black sporting body has been variously used as a means to signify racial difference (otherness), and to provide the evidential material out of which meritocratic

success can be proven. The black sporting body is brought into racist discourse to either prove that all black people are physical creatures, that their vast black mass essentially connects them to primitive impulses, excessive desire and “mindless” behavior (all body and no brain); or to herald the athletic power of the body so that all Americans can be proud of “it.” (Coleman-Bell 2006: 196–7)

By contrast, white female sporting celebrities often are framed as having ideal bodies that are to be attained and attainable to those who work them into pictures of health and slender fitness. These thin, toned, white celebrity bodies are centrally involved in reproducing the “tyranny of slenderness” (Chernin 1994) that haunts popular media culture more generally.

There is, though, to repeat and further develop the thesis of this chapter, a more general and positive phenomenological perspective from which to understand the conceit that the celebrity is an embodied figure that needs to be *experienced* to be effectively understood. They require recognition of a level of intimacy or intimate engagement that is not reducible to the demands of representation or the artifice of performance. To engage with the celebrity requires the release of feelings, a primal awakening, the activation of the senses, and the mobilization of affects. The mobilization of the celebrity senses touched by transgression may be best understood to take place through the *confession*, and in the *celebrity carnival*.

Celebrity Confessions

We live in the age of a confessional culture, and celebrity is one of the key conduits for its transmission and revelatory sense-making (Redmond 2011). The celebrity confession is often melodramatic in form; the revelation will often be tearful, there will be a degree of nervousness signaled by faulty speech patterns, body language, and perceived awkwardness, and its perceived heartfelt honesty will be essential to the way it registers as truth and legitimate feeling. The confession will often be set in a space that is meant to aestheticize the encounter, and sensationalize the outpouring. It may be set in a darkened television studio, in the celebrity’s own front room, or in an “accidental” public place that is rendered extraordinary by the very fact that the celebrity has broken down in some way. Of course, the confession may be spontaneous, free of narrativization or generic convention – it may just happen, undermining the “script” that is taking place at that moment in time. Celebrities such as Tom Cruise and Lance Armstrong have used the *Oprah Winfrey Show* to confess love, and guilt, respectively, while Amy Winehouse grieved publicly during the middle of a set.

The press conference confessional has its own particular experiential qualities: it will have been called because of some damaging media story, such as a drug scandal, alleged adultery, or perceived wrong of some sort. The press will have gathered in great numbers and a scene will have been set, with microphones and lectern center stage. The celebrity will arrive, lenses will focus, and shutters will click and click. This is a moment of pure spectacle but it has phenomenological qualities also.

The celebrity will approach the lectern/podium and will either read from a prepared script or will speak spontaneously. In either case, emotion will be seen to leak through, particularly in those cases where a “truth” is being revealed rather than the artifice of performance to shore up a celebrity’s image. The celebrity will cry, falter, shudder, and will struggle to find words, language, to articulate what becomes sensory pain escaping their bodies.

Viewers or readers who identify with the celebrity confessing will feel or undergo a bodily response: they will emit the same signs; will be caught in the grip of their own bodies confessing a shared and simultaneous pain. Again, while the confessional can be read as manufactured, a public relations exercise to stop or assuage the flow of damaging gossip, it can also be read as a carnal moment that works against the constructed and the representational. The melodramatic excess of the confession cannot be easily or simply recouped in the service of the media industries or capitalist ideology. Celebrity and viewer/reader will experience an embodied, cross-modal coming together. Again, this is best expressed or understood as a celebaesthetic confessional encounter.

There can, of course, be a powerful gendered dimension to the celebrity confessional. When it is a damaged female celebrity, caught in the grip of a damaging patriarchal culture, confessing to female fans about their woes, an experiential doorway opens up between them involving a realization and a sensorialization of hitherto unseen (if not unfelt) governance. I have argued elsewhere (Redmond 2011) that one can read Britney Spears’s head-shaving act as a type of revelatory confession where she is not only rejecting her sexualized and erotic celebrity image, but also removing herself from reproductive femininity and motherhood. Britney’s long, flowing, blonde hair is employed to confirm her idealized female beauty and to be a visible symbol of her reproductive power. Britney’s skinhead rejects her own idealization and denies the womanly body that is meant to be fertile. To cut one’s hair short isn’t just a distant sign of rejection of one’s image and of the industries that produced it, but a tactile, touch-based resistance – the hair being one of the most potent features of corporeal life – touched, brushed, combed, washed, styled, dyed, presented and represented as the “thing” that defines me as feminine, beautiful, strong, and independent. Again, the embodied act of shaving one’s head resonates with female fans at the level of their own sense-based selves. As Let Go reflectively posted on a “Britney Spears forum”:

I cried.

It was really hard for me to see her like that u could feel the pain in her eyes

In that time I cutted my hair because in this way I wanted to show her when u are hurting it hurts me too

Really hard days ...

The female celebrity confession, then, not only draws attention to a/their crisis in relation to their own manufactured and damaging celebrity image, but also transmits their pain through bodily affect. Their carnal body refuses governance, senses its own unease, leaks a truth that cannot be spoken and which cannot be undone. This is a positive type of celebrity affect involving self-determination and active agency.

The Celebrity Carnival

If there is a critical space in which sensory transgressions take place then it is the arena of what I would like to call the celebrity carnival (Redmond, 2014). This celebrity carnival is an enchanted space where “actors and spectators” equally experience joy, sex, drugs, disinhibition and revelation, and where debauched renewal takes place and is countenanced. The celebrity carnival is one that stands in opposition to social hierarchy, everyday routinized life, and the cultural and repressive constraints on the body, and which offers all under its marquee a version of the “world upside-down.” According to Bakhtin:

Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world’s revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants. (1984: 10)

The celebrity carnival takes place on a number of levels and diffuses itself through numerous settings and contexts. The celebrity carnival isn’t formed on democratic principles, and neither does it create the conditions for conformity or obedience to flourish. To the contrary, the celebrity carnival is crafted out of anarchy, involves a grotesque form of celebrity embodiment, and is built on the logic of the chaos of the senses. There are, for example, those encounters where a devoted fan attends a live performance given by their favorite celebrity. Their bodies quiver, leak, emit the uncontrollable signs of desire, longing, and need. They scream, shriek, collapse, faint, and frenetically jump up and down. The celebrity can, of course, perform with equal hysteria, caught up in the frenzy of the intimacy before them. Celebrity and fan can create the conditions for the carnival to emerge and converge on the conventions of the proceedings at hand. In a “live” Justin Bieber performance on the Australian version of the *X-Factor* in 2012, a teenage girl rushed the stage to hug and hold him. She brought misrule to the proceedings; she let her emotions take over as the erotic affects of Bieber took her over. For a few moments, the carnival entered the show and pandemonium broke out.

The punk, rock and heavy metal concert similarly invites the fan to exist purely in a carnival space counter to the regulations and routines of everyday life. Just as on stage the performer embodies the unruly laws of the celebrity carnival, so does the crowd caught up in its frenzy. The bodies on stage and in the crowd are corporeally intensified, as spit, sweat, blood, puke, rage, and heartfelt conviction are let loose upon the world. The heavy metal carnival is built on the logic of “grotesque realism”:

As in Bakhtin’s carnival, amid sweaty bodies pushing, grabbing, swaying, rubbing, and touching, the crowd is made “concrete and sensual.” Among the “pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies . . . [t]he individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people’s mass body” (Bakhtin [1936] 1984: 255). This more

subtle yet powerful carnival experience may be among the most transgressive aspects of heavy metal carnival, for it grates against a society that places primacy on autonomy, self-interest, and individualism. (Hanlon 2006: 40)

Ozzy Osbourne is one such carnival performer, at least in the heyday of the rock band Black Sabbath. He patrolled the stage like a cadaver, not quite living, not quite dead, using bodily fluids to wet the stage with his carnality. The famous “bat”-eating incident, creating the primal conditions for animal becomings, produced both repulsion and disgust in those present, as well as bestial desire. Subsequent concerts involved copycat activities, as animal and blood seeped from the crowd onto the stage, and back again.

The disgust that one finds in this type of celebrity carnival is sensory and cross-modal: smells, tastes, textures, and environments can offend us; can turn our insides out, in synesthetic union. Disgust is often met with “vile” inner materials let out, or it transforms our palettes: we vomit, gas, shit, piss, or we just experience the sense or feeling of having contaminants on our lips, caking the insides of our mouths. Disgust is related to survival, to the base instincts that reject things that might harm us. Disgust is also cultural and ideological: it works off normative and moralistic assumptions and conventions, and helps construct power-saturated binary oppositions between insiders and outsiders (Menninghaus 2003). Disgust creates an armada of taboos that arguably hold us in their corporeal and behavioral grip, or conversely, and this is my central point, they can be seen to bring into sensory existence the very essence of our animal beings, offering us transgressive experiences that momentarily wrench the body free from its civil docility.

Disgust can be understood as an antidemocratic force that opens up the body to new experiences and sensations that are usually repressed or denied expression. Disgust can be understood to be a border-crossing emotion, a particularly hypercharged form of affect, a type of “beyond” normal experience that cuts one free from language and a stable or simply known subjectivity. Such disgust can be located in/with the figure of the female toxic celebrity as she goes about carnival life.

The female toxic celebrity is a grotesque figure whom the media report to be without talent or skill, or as someone who has been seduced by carnival life and has, as a consequence, let fame go their heads. She constantly exists in a world turned upside down: at night this manifests as all-night partying and reckless behavior involving an excess of sex, drugs, and alcohol. Her body is captured by the media, the paparazzi, falling out of itself. It is a “promiscuous” body, one that challenges sexual boundaries, and is witnessed stumbling, crashing, and emptying itself of vomit. The female toxic celebrity visits bohemian or high-class clubs, is seen endlessly partying, gets caught in crimes and misdemeanors, and is brought before the law which she very often refuses to acknowledge. The female toxic celebrity recognizes misrule rather than law and order, and her embodiment of transgression pollutes the legal system that attempts to make her docile, impotent or weak. She may eventually be tamed, but there is always a time when she remains out of control, refusing to leave the night dance of the carnival.

Lindsay Lohan is one current example of the toxic female celebrity who appears to exist in almost a permanent carnival state. Her alleged alcohol and cocaine abuse was the subject of media speculation while the paparazzi would clamor to get those “unmediated” photographs of her partying, vomiting, falling out of cars with no underwear on, her waxed pubes revealed. Lohan’s nightlife adventures allegedly led to several driving under the influence charges, probation periods, periods in jail, and stints in rehab. At one probation hearing in July 2010 Lohan had written on her fingernails, “FUCK U,” a direct challenge to authority, to the legal system. Her relationship with disc jockey Samantha Ronson transgressed heterosexual norms, and allowed her to openly question sexual binaries. In short, Lohan expressed her misrule in and through her transgressive embodiment. While the media constructed a discourse around her of pathetic disintegration, she nonetheless made sense-based meaning through actions and activities that relied on sensorial communication that cannot be so easily contained, constrained, or digested by dominant discourse. She was a figure to be identified with.

Of course, in the daytime, the female toxic celebrity continues to endlessly consume, but it is goods, clothes, food, high fashion, and exotic holidays that fill her time. The toxic female celebrity refuses to work hard, to regulate her behavior according to routine or routinized life, and so the carnival life continues for her. Paris Hilton is seen to live this type of out-of-time toxic experience, where without talent, skill, or “occupation” (Rojek 2001), but with an abundance of wealth, she consumes and consumes to excess.

As such, the temporal and spatial conditions of a female toxic celebrity’s life exist permanently in the realm of the carnival, and this is different, therefore, from Bakhtin’s position that while the carnival isn’t constrained by space it is limited in time, since all people have to eventually return to the ordinary world. Bakhtin argued that the carnival always had to end, but in celebrity culture, in this particular toxic embodiment of the celebrity carnival, there is no end to the grotesque, or to the realms of excess that are countenanced. The party goes on and on and on.

Female fans of the toxic celebrity can be seen to embrace this “toxic” carnival experience, if media moral panics are even partly true, and if fansites and blogs tell an accurate story. Fans often live in the night in hedonistic and debauched reverie; and they consume by day. They experience their bodies in unregulated ways and find commune and communal value in doing so. Their identification with celebrities such as Amy Winehouse and Lady Gaga are built on this experience of recognizing their difference and exploring it. Lady Gaga calls her fans Little Monsters, and herself Mother Monster, in recognition of their shared difference, outsider status, and refusal to accept gender and sexual norms and behaviors, and of her role as their abject projector. Her difference, their difference, is the material out of which the carnival comes into being. As an ardent fan blogged on the communal website of Lady Gaga’s Little Monsters:

I needed to vent.

I really can’t explain how I felt when I saw Gaga’s painting. I know she is channeling emotion into art because I did the exact same thing during the darkest time in my life.

Gaga I can just tell you that you are art and you are everything you have the power to be and record labels and the media can't change that you genuinely love your fans and the art you create with them. I am proud of how far you have come and how much shit you've dealt with and maybe I don't know what's going on in your personal life but just remember that here I will always hold you in the palm of my hand when you are sad and I will be sad with you. When you're lonely I will be lonely too. I really hope that you are going to be alright with how you're feeling and that you can rely on family and taylor to make you smile. I don't care about charts and awards I fucking care about you and the music and art you create for the fans not the public. I love you to Venus and back babe. @gaga

This fan's ode to Gaga is a complex mixture of love, adoration, and mirroring. She credits Gaga with getting her through the dark times, but also constructs likeness scenarios where they both feel the same pain and anguish. Gaga becomes the vehicle to both express pain, and overcome it.

Bakhtin (1984) argued that as the carnivalesque was forced from the world, it penetrated language and literature, which took on its sensorial qualities and drew upon the conditions of the grotesque to create the carnival experience. Much of celebrity culture is embodied in form, relying on the body to communicate its stories of love, lust and desire. The real condition of the relation between fan and celebrity is one of/through/in and within the body. This is the celebaesthetic relationship that I began the introduction to this chapter with: a relational exchange, skin-on-skin, sense loaded upon sense, that is very often primordial, carnal, and carnalivesque.

I would now like to undertake a close textural reading of Miley Cyrus, taking one "event" moment, the release of her "Wrecking Ball" video, to anchor my sense-driven analysis of celebrity culture.

Miley Cyrus, Vulvas and Affective Tears

When Miley Cyrus appeared on the *Alan Carr: Chatty Man* show (September 13, 2013), the narrative and representational markers that define her as a particular star were in obvious play. Cyrus is immediately sexualized and (playfully, knowingly) comments on her sexualization. Carr greets Cyrus with "my God, you look fabulous!" and their opening discussion begins with a question on how long it takes her to put on her tight latex pants. Cyrus responds with "it is not the time but the amount of people, there is a lot of people doing a lot of this on your thigh" (she rubs her thighs up and down and the camera cuts to a close-up of the action). Cyrus thus becomes the sum of her sexual parts, the latex a fetish for her sexual being, complicit with if not in control of the gaze that falls upon her. That Carr is camp, queer, sanitizes or masks the exchange as one that is firmly built on patriarchal, heterosexual norms and desires. Nonetheless, the scene is built on recognizing touch and texture, flesh and sex; an aesthetic and celebaesthetic set of experiences are being registered at the exact same time sexist discourse moves its way over her body.

Later in the interview, we return to the story of Cyrus's "vagina" (the term Carr uses, a telling "naming" in itself), with Carr getting her to talk about the "rubber

finger” she pointed at, and caressed it with, at the Video Music Awards. This narrativization of Cyrus’s vagina, her sexualized body, is further extended with questions about her nude video shoot for her latest single “Wrecking Ball.” We learn that the video director Terry Richardson called on Cyrus to do more sexual stuff, to “take it further,” confirming that a male gaze and sexist logic shaped its operations and perversions. The attempted abjection of Cyrus (she is merely her vagina, an open, dangerous perversion) is accompanied by its naming and embodied power – we see her flaunt herself, available but active in the game that is under way on the show. Cyrus embodies the full forces of the celebrity carnival.

The questions and exchanges between Carr and Cyrus are accompanied with insert shots from both events/texts, so that we see Cyrus caressing her own crotch, fellating a sledgehammer, and straddling a wrecking ball without any clothes on. For large parts of the interview, then, Cyrus’s star image is reduced to body parts and sexualized acts and while she articulates active agency and a postfeminist sense of control over, and empowerment through, her body, she is also being shaped by the excesses of contemporary patriarchy and the cultural industries which sell young female stars through their made-available, accessible bodies (Negra 2008).

Of course Cyrus is the perfect embodiment of this juvenilization of the sexual body; in fact her star trajectory is built out of its foundations. Cyrus was a Disney Princess, a committed southern Baptist, from a loving Christian family, whose star image perfectly matched Hannah Montana, the character she played. She was purity, chastity, and innocence personified. Now Cyrus can’t be tamed, her still young, fit and manicured body is drawn into a regime of explicitness, and yet the traces of Hannah remain (Carr actually makes the connection in the interview) and so Cyrus exists in a precarious, pedophilic state. It is this, of course, which makes her so contentious, so troubling at the level of ideology and sense-making.

This is compounded by the twerk, and Cyrus’s appropriation of black female sexuality and abundance. It can be argued that Cyrus is “pimping” black culture to eroticize her own white, childlike body and to transgress identity positions. Again, the process is made meaningful in and through her body – its movement, availability, and explicitness. It isn’t just a white empowered consumption of otherness, but a rejection of the dull dish of female white culture (hooks 1992). Cyrus’s twerk has power because it is lived and experienced fully and wildly and without apology or remorse.

There is another dimension of her star image drawn attention to in the interview. When Carr offers Cyrus a drink from his kitsch drinks cabinet, she chooses one on the basis of the color and design of the bottle. Carr jokingly refers to this as “shallow.” In discursive terms, of course, Cyrus is considered to be shallow, empty-headed, and driven by consumption logic and a possessive individualism (Macpherson 1962). She is toxic and toxified. Her appearance on the Carr show is of course cross-promotional – she is selling her latest single, the album, and all the ancillary products she is connected too – and during the interview she draws attention to the fact that being “out there” gets her public attention. Cyrus and her vulva then are turned or transformed into a commodity fetish with her relationship to “it” both complicit and alienated: ultimately Cyrus cannot see that

her labor creates a system of sexual exploitation, one which she is part of and (self) promoting.

Or perhaps she can see or feel some of this, a possibility that the Carr interview never gives an airing too. The Carr interview sets Cyrus up as a sexualized, commodity intertext, reinforcing this as the only possible reading of her performances. There is a moment, though, when the “script” that is being constructed tears a little: when Cyrus is asked about the video shoot for “Wrecking Ball” she talks about it being a very emotional day. Carr, of course, skips over this to concentrate on her vulva.

The “Wrecking Ball” video is comprised of two incongruous frames and settings: Cyrus shot in close-up, shedding affective tears – a direct allusion to Sinéad O’Connor’s video for “Nothing Compares 2 U” (1989); and the sequences of the foreplay with the sledgehammer and wrecking ball, which slowly destroys the four walls that she is being contained within. Combined together, the video is a confused mixture of suffering and longing, of hating and loving, of fucking and being fucked over. Cyrus’s tears fall down soft, young cheeks, and are cut next to the images of fellatio and sex – an allusion perhaps to her own sexual exploitation at the hands of patriarchy. There is also a touch of the masculine and the androgynous about Cyrus: her short hair, work boots and physicality blur or complicate her sexualization here. Drawing on O’Connor of course enables this reading: O’Connor felt abused by patriarchy and resisted it through the rest of her musical career. These “sisters” are sharing an affective moment of loss and confusion across time and place. (In the interview, Cyrus connects her work to other females who have pushed the envelope, including Britney Spears, Madonna, and Lady Gaga, further suggesting an awareness of shared resistance to “acceptable” patriarchal norms.) The sledgehammer and wrecking ball are the cock and balls of patriarchy, no pun intended but a good one nonetheless. She is in their thrall but they are breaking down around her. At the end of the video the suggestion is that Miley somehow escapes this perverse world and the perversity of her own star image. Her body escapes the discourses and representations that frame, constrain, and contain her. Although, of course, this is not the case: a star like Cyrus remains dependent on its architecture if she is to remain relevant and in the public eye.

Sex sells but it is unlikely to be the only story worth telling, or sharing, or identifying with. For female fans, the “Wrecking Ball” video might not be a gross celebration of available female sexuality but an indictment of it, or at least one that brings the contestations and contradictions of female sexuality into the open. This opening manifests through sense-based transformations and transgressions; through carnal appetite and transgressions.

Conclusion

Sensing celebrities involves recognition of the way complementary sensory-based elements come together to create, produce and transmit levels of affect and intensities. The approach recognizes the cross-modal nature of identification, and the way the body readily escapes its own docility and entrapment. I see transgressive and

positive outcomes from the way the celebaesthetic subject operates and have used the example of the confession and celebrity carnival to anchor the way resistance is brought into corporeal being. The chapter nonetheless recognizes the ideological and discursive nature of celebrity embodiment, but refuses to see it as always determining meaning, since other forms of phenomenological truths escape.

We escape through, in, and within celebrity, and not through some fantasy mechanism, or para-social fakery. We escape because our bodies and their senses are activated in intense and affecting ways that cannot simply be used up or be recuperated by dominant ideology. We escape because the conditions of our existence demand it of us even as they attempt to regulate us and control us. In sensing celebrities we can get beyond the constraints and impositions of ideology and discourse, finding new ways to be in the world.

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Part Seven

Celebrity Embodiment

Introduction

Tamara Heaney and Sean Redmond

*When I dream of celebrity I see desiring and desirable bodies rise and fall
before me*

Celebrities come to us in and through their enchanted bodies. These bodies emit magical signs and they give off powerful feelings and mobilize affects that are heightened and intense. Celebrities often stand as perfected or flawed creatures, embody identity politics, and give meaning to the imagined body of the nation-state. In this respect, golfer Tiger Woods becomes, first, the embodied truth that the United States has entered a postrace state of greater social equality (Berlant 1997), and, second, the reconstituted radicalized myth that black men are, after all, essentially sexual “bad-bucks” (Bogle 2001).

Celebrity embodiment then is not simply about the body of the celebrity as it literally presents itself in the social and representational world, but the range of values, meanings, and affecting qualities that are attached to its skin, bone, and torso. The celebrity body is never neutral: it carries with it the discourses, concerns, and passions of the age.

The celebrity body is the conduit through which dominant ideologies about gender, race, class and sexuality are disseminated (Holmes and Redmond 2006: 124). These ideologies are most commonly mobilized through celebrity gossip in which celebrity bodies are scrutinized for signs of aging, addiction, plastic surgery, pregnancy, weight gain or weight loss, and class (Fairclough 2012; Wilson 2010). Through the discourse of celebrity gossip, we are made aware of what is deemed to be appropriate displays of the famous body. Further, we are discursively positioned to evaluate and make judgments about these celebrities, particularly when their bodies are excessively gendered and raced. For example, images from Kim Kardashian’s nude photo spread for *Paper* magazine (November 2014) were distributed across a plethora of media outlets. Through the discourse of celebrity embodiment readers

were being positioned to evaluate (and “gossip” about) her corporeality in terms of race and gender. Kardashian’s Armenian heritage is evoked through her olive coloring, and her curvaceous buttocks speak to racist myths about nonwhite female bodies and their surplus of sexuality. There are also class and esteem measures being signified: Kim Kardashian emerged through starring in a reality TV show and sex tape – she is both heiress and tramp/slut.

As performers, the celebrity registers as a series of gestures, emotions, and actions and reactions. They carry with them a repertoire of favored idioms and incarnations, such as Brando’s often-repeated wayward melancholy cast as a haunting look and lumbering body. These embodied performances allow us to get to know and understand the motivations of the celebrity: it enables the fan or consumer to get close and closer still. When we put up a poster of a figure we idolize, it is their embodied presence we are inviting into our lives. Emulation and imitation are two of the tropes associated with such celebrity identification (Stacey 1994). We want to be(come) the body of the celebrity we so admire. We only have to think of the number of Elvis look-alikes to see his embodied reincarnation lived a hundred thousand times over.

However, there is also an embodied authenticity about our celebrities that we are asked by the cultural intermediaries to test, and test and survey we do: we search their flesh for all sorts of desiring and desirable markers, fatal flaws, and imperfections. Inauthenticity, then, is also one of the discourses through which celebrities are revealed and measured, played out in magazines such as *OK!* And *Hello!*, where nose jobs, and breast implants are exclusively reported on (Holmes 2005). Through surveying and monitoring the celebrity body we strip them back down to size. Ultimately, the celebrity body embodies the waning of affect in the languid age of liquid modernity. Celebrity bodies let us down.

The celebrity body is heavily gendered. As idealized figures, they give us radiant smiles, chiseled arms, and perfect figures to admire, desire, and long for (Dyer 1986). Masculinity and femininity are created around these two poles of difference, set within a heterosexual ethical space. When the famed masculinity or femininity of these extraordinary celestial bodies becomes absolute, the embodiment it offers is transcendent, beyond earthly bodily configurations. Idealized white celebrities encapsulate this translucent deification since they are often imagined to be made of light and as close to God as on can be while still being mortal (Dyer 1997). The star body of Cate Blanchett speaks to white femininity and to the aura of the “blonde” whose beauty registers at the apex of idealization – although her white female idealization is also immaculate and nonsexual, which creates a form of embodiment that very often teeters on the brink of its own expiration (Dyer 1997; Redmond 2014). Celebrity bodies die before us.

As perfected, commodity bodies, the celebrity also gives flesh to abstract desire; they become the conduit through which neoliberal fantasies are played out precisely in the way the promotion and purchasing of all manner of goods and services is impregnated with the stardust of the famous endorser (Rojek 2001; Cashmore 2006). When a perfume bottle is shaped like the celebrity who endorses it, their corporeality is transferred from body to bottle, then from to hand to neck, the scent becoming their skin recast in liquid form.

As child star in the character of Hannah Montana, Miley Cyrus is white innocence and exacting beauty personified. She is heavenly and carries the church within her heart. She holds within her obedient, gendered body the values of patriarchy and heterosexual dreaming. As the young pop star who twerks, and can't be tamed, she draws upon black radicalized idioms and caricatures to fetishize her buttocks and sexualize her flesh. Miley's twerk repositions her as a transgressive or wayward teen celebrity, as someone who has left the wholesome body of Hannah Montana behind. Nonetheless, both Miley's Hannah and Miley's sexualized dance help sell perfume, branded clothes, and concert tickets. Celebrity flesh and sex sells. Miley is the perfect embodiment of this commodity carnal cartography.

That said, celebrity embodiment is also decidedly phenomenological and experiential, something that Redmond (2014) has defined as the celebaesthetic encounter. There is always a sensuous aesthetic exchange that takes place when fans and consumers take hold of a celebrity. Textures, light, color, sounds, movements and impressions permeate the way celebrities enter the social, and are engaged with. The body of the celebrity and the body of the fan can be experienced firsthand, cast in a semi-otic landscape of intense affects. As fans and consumers we feel or make sense of our celebrities in and through our bodies and we communicate our response to them in richly somatic ways. The body of the fan screams, cries, jumps up and down, swoons in absolute rare delight. It is as if our fingers know what the celebrity means to us at the exact moment language fails to comprehend the sensory power of the encounter.

The celebrity body is not static, fixed or immobile: it ages, and ages differently for men and women; it gets resignified to ensure longevity. Female celebrities are not only asked to age differently from men, they are exhorted to *defy* the aging process. The aging celebrity body is taken up by dominant culture in different ways and across different media, with male celebrities maintaining viable and lucrative careers in Hollywood and television as they age (Fairclough 2012; Jermyn 2013). Many of the discourses around aging female celebrity bodies are framed in terms of whether or not they are able to hide their aging and keep the labor involved in doing so hidden, through plastic surgery for example (Fairclough 2012; Kaklamanidou 2012).

The virtual celebrity body is able to circumvent aging, or even death. Through the use of new digital technologies, celebrity bodies can be preserved or reanimated, to be watched and celebrated time and again (Redmond 2014). Through these new technologies, the celebrity body is more accessible to fans than ever before. Celebrity images are now distributed through a plethora of celebrity gossip sites, fan websites, social media and blogs, allowing us to visually dissect and closely evaluate Kardashian's buttocks, or Madonna's wrinkles, as never before. The possibilities for meaningful interactions *between* fan and celebrity body are increased through social media sites such as Twitter; where a fan can have the object of their desire sitting at their computer with them, or appearing on their smartphone, replying personally to their tweet. Celebrity bodies are simultaneously dematerialized and rematerialized, rendered virtual and proximate.

The celebrity body has its own meaty metronome, caught in movement not entirely of its own choosing but nonetheless held within or by the strict rhythms of liquid modernity and late neoliberal capitalism. This tension between freedom and

control, conformity and transgression, patriarchy and promiscuity, authenticity and brand, semiotics and experience wraps itself around the complexities of celebrity embodiment, as the timeless time of the celebrity metronome scores its own beat, beat, beat.

When I dream of celebrity I see my desiring and desirable body rise and fall before me...

The three chapters in this section examine the different ways in which the celebrity body can be appropriated in the articulation of identity. Both the essay by Negra and that by Andrews, Lopes and Jackson investigate the celebrity body in terms of national identity. They explore the ways in which national identity is evoked and repudiated through the on-screen and offscreen/off-field performance of the celebrity body. With digital technologies expanding and becoming more sophisticated, old modes of star/fan interaction have been disrupted. Cinque's chapter on the (digitized) celebrity body speaks to this transformation, suggesting that the "digital shimmer" enables a more immersive fan/star experience.

In "The ambivalent Irishness of Denis Leary and Kathy Griffin," Diane Negra examines the performance of "Irishness" by Leary and Griffin, and argues that in the twenty-first century, Irishness has become a "racially anxious category." She studies Leary's performance of Irishness in both his stand-up comedy work and the critically acclaimed drama *Rescue Me*. She then explores Griffin's Irishness performed through a ribald persona that critiques fame and the celebrity culture she herself is part of. Negra points out that while Leary and Griffin have both achieved success and wealth (the "American Dream"), their performance of Irishness functions to establish their "racial and working-class legitimacy." This legitimacy is often infused with markers of blackness, with both Leary and Griffin borrowing from, or referencing black culture in their work. Negra goes on to note that through a commitment to maintaining healthy and toned star bodies, their whiteness is restored, evading the haunting specter of the "Irish immigrant body" with its historical proclivity for alcohol addiction. Negra puts forward a compelling argument that in US popular culture, Irishness is most often portrayed as oscillating between "a self-conscious whiteness and a strategic race transcendence."

In their chapter "Neymar: sport celebrity and performative cultural politics," Andrews, Lopes, and Jackson examine the sport celebrity of Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior (Neymar). Their interest is in exploring the performative aspect of sport celebrity and the way in which "normative expectations of *brasilidade* (Brazilian-ness) are reproduced through the performance, representation, and consumption of the *futebol* spectacle, particularly as expressed through the bodies of celebrated players such as Neymar." Andrews, Lopes and Jackson argue that Neymar has come to not only embody the popular imagination of what constitutes "Brazilianness", but also neoliberal ideologies and values. They begin their chapter by charting the history of *futebol-arte* and its cultural importance to Brazil. Andrews, Lopes and Jackson then turn to an examination of Neymar's performance in advertisements for brands such as Nike and Panasonic. They argue that Neymar "naturalizes and normalizes

neoliberal agendas and ideologies,” embodying such values through his performance of individualism, particularly in advertising campaigns where he can be seen espousing mantras such as “challenge yourself” and “chase your dreams.”

In Cinque’s “Digital shimmer: popular music and the intimate nexus between fan and star,” it is the digital, dematerialized celebrity body that is examined. Cinque argues that far from depersonalizing the relationship between fan and star, new digital technologies offer exciting and innovative ways to create a more intimate and immersive experience for the fan. Citing Kristeva’s *phenotext* and Barthes’s *pheno-song*, Cinque proposes use of the term *phaino-ken*, to describe the “essence of the star/fan relationship whereby the star ‘glows’ with the ‘reflected light’ of the culture in which it exists, and the process by which a willing listener body ‘becomes’ more than they might have been.” Using popular music as her focus, Cinque examines the relationship between star performance and affective response, and argues: “what is afforded now is a new intimate nexus by technology that might be likened to a digital shimmer; a seemingly real image and always important, but mostly an illusionary virtual relationship.” Cinque’s analysis of the interactive video strategy used by the band Little Dragon for the release of their song “Klapp Klapp” demonstrates how the digital shimmer, through utilizing dematerialized bodies, is able to draw “the relationship between star and listening body ever closer.”

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The Ambivalent Irishness of Denis Leary and Kathy Griffin

Diane Negra

This essay takes on board the ubiquitous proliferation of celebrity signs in contemporary culture and their role in concentrating social discourses of gender, class, citizenship, and ethnicity. As P. David Marshall observes, “Because of its embodiment of collective configurations within individual representations, the celebrity is a locus of formative social power in consumer capitalism” (1997: 51). In the attention I pay here to discourses of wealth, ambition, and body consciousness in the specific national context of the United States in the early twenty-first century, I also hope to further awareness of the role celebrity plays in the culture of deepening income inequality and in negotiating the troubled status of the once ideologically robust “American Dream.”

Among the many functions of stars is their ability to model and measure assimilative energies, conditions of aspirational success and terms of national belonging. Here I examine two American stand-up comedians whose work in television, print culture and digital media has coalesced in the post-millennial period in ways that have consolidated their celebrity while consistently anchoring its meanings in ethnically inflected, sometimes contradictory affective registers of aspiration, cynicism and discontent. Irish-American identity is a staple element of the personas of Denis Leary and Kathy Griffin and the manner and mode of its presentation suggests that in the early twenty-first century Irishness in the US remains in many ways a racially anxious category.

In part, this chapter is shaped to ask what happens to Irishness in America after its peak period of representability. If the 1990s were marked by the conspicuous success of such Irish and Irish-American popular culture franchises as the stage show *Riverdance*, the rock band U2 and the memoir *Angela's Ashes*, and were replete with images of global Irish celebrity in the form of figures from film and music like Liam Neeson, Enya, Pierce Brosnan, Sinéad O'Connor, and Gabriel Byrne, the euphoric transatlantic celebration of Irishness seemed to reach a saturation point around the

millennium, and the succeeding decade and a half has been marked by a lower-profile, though steady, output of Irish and Irish American cultural products.¹ I have argued elsewhere that the millennial transition and the events of 9/11 help to mark both continuity and change in “an American national expressive culture that strategically mobilizes Irishness in its self-narrativization” (Negra 2006: 354). Specifically I note that “if before 9/11 Irishness was most often invoked to negotiate the traumas of deficient family values or to assuage a sense of capitalism run amok, its flexibility is such that after this seminal event, it could be differently mobilized to stave off an anxious, traumatized perception of American identity” (2006: 356).

In mapping the contours of American Irishness in the period after 9/11, then, it seems clear that the celebratory Irishness of the 1990s has given way to something else. Charting what I think is a distinctive shift in the affective economy of Irishness, I posit it as a low-grade, ubiquitous and tenacious ethnic affiliation. The Irishness that is most regularly invoked in recent US popular culture oscillates between a self-conscious whiteness and a strategic race transcendence. The early 2000s saw a strong representational return to themes of Irish gangsterism both on television (*Brotherhood* in 2006–8 and *The Black Donnellys* in 2007, whose very title bespeaks a desire to align Irishness and blackness) and in film (*The Departed* in 2006 and *The Town* in 2010). Elsewhere I have noted how frequently post-9/11 Irishness corresponds with performances of white male anger, notably in the personas of right-wing commentators such as Fox news personalities (Negra 2009).² Since then the centralization of angry white Irish-American men and the thematization of Irishness as dysfunctionally tribal have been further updated in television fare, including *Sons of Anarchy* (2008–14) and *Ray Donovan* (2013 on). Broadly speaking, this perceptible affective turn in Irishness entails its now recurrent presentation as an ethnicity associated with a diffuse social anger; that anger is sometimes directed at repressive church orthodoxies, family troubles, discrimination, or class hierarchies, but most frequently at an American social and economic order that is perceived to have lost touch with democratic practices and values.

In Denis Leary and Kathy Griffin we find two of the most high-profile and sustained examples of post-9/11 American Irishness.³ Leary’s critically lauded FX firefighter drama *Rescue Me* (2004–11) rode a wave of popularity for male-centered quality dramas granted cultural permission to trade in a heightened visual and linguistic explicitness. In his stand-up comedy and book publications, meanwhile, he gives voice to a consistent critique of millennial American complacency and sloth in a presentational mode that matches world-weariness with a cynical truth-telling pleasure. If Leary has consolidated Irishness for “quality TV,” Griffin has done so as part of a project of encoding herself as what she deems a “D List” celebrity, continually underscoring her supposedly abject status in a Hollywood pecking order (even as her celebrity consolidated to the point where she now co-hosts the CNN New Year’s Eve telecast with Anderson Cooper).⁴ In her stock in trade, both performing and highlighting breaches of decorum, Griffin revels in a ribald comedic mode dedicated to deflating the pretensions and exposing the hypocrisy of stardom and rigorously critiques the pathologies of a fame culture. Her bon mots don’t always manifest racial awareness, but when they do they are frequently laserlike in their

social perceptiveness. Appearing on *The Craig Ferguson Show*, for instance, Griffin called Sarah Palin's daughter Bristol "the white Precious."

Griffin's "raunch comedy" was built on a sense of affiliation with niche audiences, most notably the gay viewers with whom she continually makes common cause (although she is a straight woman), invoking her frequent catchphrase "my gays" with a knowing warmth.⁵ Leary and Griffin can perform gender in unruly, sometimes highly self-aware ways and I am interested in how their Irish off-whiteness is gendered, bearing in mind Stephanie Rains's contention in *The Irish-American in Popular Culture* that "the diaspora experience of ethnicity construction appears particularly focused on gender representation and symbolism" (2007: 145).

For now I would observe that the shared cynicism of these two stars is sourced in an Irishness that offsets and negotiates the pungent critiques of American culture with which they are associated.⁶ I intend here to read their star personas as a partial and highly qualified means of addressing the question of what happens to Irishness in America in a period when credible aspirationalism and national optimism have largely broken down. I am interested in how new configurations of Irishness speak American disillusionment and a canny cynicism about the status quo.

Leary has long sought to make white masculinity visible and to document its foibles and grievances without relinquishing its privileges. His stand-up routine "No cure for cancer" opens with what he calls "a song about the American Dream" and includes the lyric line "I'm just a regular Joe, with a regular job. I'm your average, white suburban slob." For those who watched even a small bit of *Rescue Me* it was clear that Leary's midlife fireman Tommy Gavin, from the Queens area of New York, continually self-marks as Irish – his character's stock of Irish-themed T-shirts seems inexhaustible and the series dialog regularly goes out of its way to denominate Tommy's ethnicity.⁷ In *Rescue Me*, as in the comedy of Kathy Griffin, candor, familial dysfunction and substance abuse are defined as Irish traits and practices and Irishness is straightforwardly deemed a toxic emotional heritage, as may be seen in a season 5, episode 3 exchange in which Tommy discusses his concern for his daughter with his friend and fellow firefighter Lou Shea, who tells him, "She's Irish, she's gonna wind up angry no matter what happens."

Amanda D. Lotz categorizes *Rescue Me* as part of a distinct cluster of early millennial television series set in "homosocial enclaves" dedicated to "men trying to work out contemporary expectations of masculinity" (2014: 116). Within this enclave space Irishness is a privileged element and it is evident that Leary's Tommy Gavin perpetuates a long tradition of Irish masculinity being "represented as savagely outside of social controls upon male violence" (Rains 2007: 167). Rains observes that in recent decades a "developing project of recuperating working-class white masculinity has begun to co-opt Irishness with increasing frequency, as a result of its position as an 'acceptable' form of whiteness" (2007: 183), and this characterization clearly applies to *Rescue Me*.

Writing about a new generation of Irish-born stars in contemporary Hollywood, such as Colin Farrell, Ruth Barton provocatively asserts that "with the increasing visibility of a new generation of such actors, it could be argued that the Irish in Hollywood are in the process of re-negotiating their whiteness, if not becoming black

again" (2006: 9–10). Both Leary and Griffin express their (American) Irishness in large part through ongoing invocations of blackness. In season 3, episode 7 of Griffin's *My Life on the D List* she spoofs celebrity benevolence in racial terms, handing out cash to working-class women on the street and professing that she "wants to be the red-headed Oprah." Meanwhile, she makes plans for acquiring a dress suitable for being honored at an event in New York hosted by *Irish America* magazine; subsequently admiring her ensemble, she describes herself as "a young, white Diana Ross." Later in the episode, on a visit to the Irish town of Drogheda, Griffin identifies it as "my mom's New Jack City."⁸

Leary's characterization in *Rescue Me* depends heavily on similar conjunctions of Irishness and race pride coded in an African-American vocabulary. When, in season 6, episode 3, Tommy's estranged wife Janet discovers his plan to attain sobriety by swearing off hard liquor while continuing to drink wine, she tells him that alcoholism is "in his blood" and he responds as follows:

Tommy: You know what this is, it's racist. That's what this is. No, no no, it's a stereotypical Irish cliché. All we're good for is drinking. Right.

Janet: And fighting.

Tommy: Racism

Janet: And making bad food

Tommy: Racism

More tellingly, in season 5, episode 12, Tommy and junior firefighter "Black Shawn" (so-called because there is already a Caucasian crew member named Sean) have an exchange that is indicative of the racial self-consciousness of the series. Earlier in the episode Tommy is lambasted by Sean for turning a hose on him in a firehouse prank, an act whose significance in the light of the treatment of civil rights marchers in Birmingham the series openly references. Shawn tells Tommy, "you never turn a hose on a black man," and when Tommy relates the incident later to Janet she responds in disbelief, asking him "You turned a hose on a black man?" In a subsequent exchange Tommy apologizes and invites Sean (who is dating his daughter Colleen) over to a dinner that is meant to communicate a "happy family" vibe to Tommy's younger daughter. Invoking the film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (1967) as a reference point for Tommy's desire that Shawn not be "too black" on the occasion, Sean detects a number of codewords and phrases in Tommy's fumbling advice for him to "act right," to be "a gentleman," to be "classy," and to be "nice," and observes that in effect Tommy is telling him to "act white." When Shawn agrees to this in hopes of reconciling with Colleen after a fight, Tommy attempts to seal the deal with a fist bump, which Shawn rejects, telling him "that's a black thing." Tommy's unconvincing rejoinder is an assertion that he meant the gesture as "an Irish thing," with his clenched fist symbolizing a potato.

In an unusual instance of series memory, *Rescue Me* revisits this exchange in season 6, episode 7. When Tommy seemingly cures Colleen's alcoholism by filling a baptismal font with liquor and repeatedly holding her head in it until she passes out, he and Shawn bond over her "recovery" and Tommy gives him advice about how to

handle the consequences of Sean's physical argument with another firefighter. At this point Shawn invites him to bump fists, saying "Black Irish," and in response Tommy invokes "O-apostrophe-Bama."

Such nervous invocations of blackness are indicative of Lauren Onkey's assertion that "For better and for worse, transatlantic Irish identity continues to understand itself in relationship to a transatlantic blackness" (2010: 192).⁹ It seems clear that the role Irishness so often played in the 1990s as a hyphenating enhancement and a situating ethnic add-on has become less viable; Irishness is now likely to present itself as at once defensive and uncertain. At the same time we can see that Leary has had a significant creative charge in the last decade and his Irish performativity, though it does not originate with 9/11, has been made trenchant by it. In the long-running firefighter drama with which he has been consistently associated and for which he has drawn critical accolades, Irishness gains discursive authority in a dramatic register and Leary acquires a cultural capital hitherto unavailable to him as a stand-up comedian.

The conjoint Irishness and blackness that undergirds Leary and Griffin's racial self-presentation can be comparably periodized but it is differently sourced. Leary's Irishness precedes but significantly coalesces around the 9/11 "martyrdom" of low status, frontline white ethnic men. *Rescue Me* in large part proceeds from ethnic masculinity's recognition of its expendability, a recognition that is reinforced by the inequalities of boom era capitalism and neoliberal class warfare. M. Keith Booker provocatively suggests "the bourgeois form of the show tends to undermine its working-class content" (2012: 173). Effectively, in order to comply with the aesthetic and ideological strictures of "quality TV," *Rescue Me* makes moves away from the working-class credibility it seeks to sustain. While Booker makes only passing mention of the series' commitment to the representation of American Irishness, *Rescue Me*'s in-between class positioning is (at least in part) a function of its desire to retain an Irishness associated with working-class striving without threatening the cultural capital typically held by the kind of contemporary Irish-American viewers likely to watch "quality" cable series.

One of the elements that Leary and Griffin might be seen to hold in common is a desire to mobilize their Irishness as a form of "insider/outsider" positioning. As Linda Mizejewski's account of Griffin suggests, managed alterity has long been crucial to Griffin's comedy. Though she sources her sense of comic marginality largely in queer discourses of affiliation, it is also rooted, both fictionally and autobiographically, in discourses of ethnicity. Griffin's rise to prominence in the 1990s, for instance, in the sitcom *Suddenly Susan* (1996–2000) saw her playing a Jewish comic sidekick in a vehicle intended to showcase the career comeback of Brooke Shields, a star that Mizejewski points out was once deemed by Eddie Murphy "the whitest woman in America" (2014: 87).

Griffin's association with a carnivalesque, anxious working-class whiteness might be seen to originate in her appearance in Eminem's 2000 music video "The real Slim Shady," which notably opens with Eminem being ventriloquized by Griffin. The comic's role here as a nurse in the psychiatric ward where Eminem is a patient signifies on several levels. Since the piece makes derogatory mention of Britney Spears,

Christina Aguilera, Will Smith and Pamela Anderson and operates in part as a reflection on Eminem's own burgeoning celebrity, Griffin's appearance is consistent with her own critiques of the pretensions and aspirations of fame. But I think there are other meanings at play here in this complex text, which was MTV's 2000 Video of the Year. Eminem's distinctive skill might be understood to lie, as S. Craig Watkins puts it, in his "ability to make his whiteness matter and not matter" (2005: 107), a characterization that would also seem to apply to Leary and Griffin. The question of what it means for Griffin to be situated here gains resonance when we know that this was not the first instance of her proximate placement to spectacular assertions of racial identity in highly charged male-centered material. This dynamic in fact originates with Quentin Tarantino's 1994 *Pulp Fiction*, where she appears as a pedestrian who helps Marsellus Wallace after he's hit by the car driven by Bruce Willis's Butch Coolidge. One of Griffin's most interesting features is her habit of making such small cameo appearances in high-profile texts about white masculinity under duress. Arguably another such appearance occurs in her guest-starring 2010 role in an episode of the television drama *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* where, as lesbian activist "Babs Duffy," Griffin tells series regular Detective Elliot Stabler (Christopher Meloni), "I think you just have a problem with strong women" and critiques his "piss poor patriarchal attitude."

From the early 2000s on Griffin has seen a steady ascent in her star power, while her comedy has relied more consistently on Irishness as a compensatory identity credential. In her 2004 stand-up routine in *Allegedly*, Griffin gives an account of her racial nervousness on the set of "The real Slim Shady" that exemplifies this tendency. Discussing Eminem she says:

So he shows up with all his posse, right? He's white, they're all black. He's talking blacker than anybody, right? ... And it was so confusing to me because he's like yeah, yeah, girl, you trippin' and all that shit. And I, nothing makes me more uncomfortable than white people who talk black. I just get nervous, I have like, I mean it's fun on Rikki Lake but I just get (clutches stomach). I don't know what to do. I don't know if I'm supposed to talk black or maybe I should just talk Puerto Rican, I don't know what I'm supposed to do. And I'm looking around and what's the first thing you do when white people do that, you look at the black people (mimics this, gives black power salute). So I look at the actual African-Americans and it's just the Emperor's New Clothes to them ... and I just panic, so I started talking with an Irish accent. I swear to God, I was just like Top o' the Mornin' to you, Marshall.

An account of this kind gives evidence of the striking way in which Leary's and Griffin's Irishness manifests itself as highly racially self-conscious. This consistently comparative sense of racial awareness accompanies a sense that what is in play for both stars is a revival of working-class Irishness seemingly sanctioned through their cross-platform success and implicit transcendence of their roots. It is telling that both Griffin and Leary have had significant, perhaps unexpected midlife "second acts" in their careers in a post-9/11 cultural milieu that has seemingly resecured an Irish link to working-classness. In seeking to chart here a new phase in the functioning of

Irishness to particularize a burdensome early twenty-first century whiteness, I would point to audience awareness of the wealth of both stars, who occupy class positions decidedly at odds with their customary discursive platforms. Leary and Griffin are alike in the ways they call upon a disputatious, truth-telling Irishness to speak social critique. They are also alike in that their sense of privilege is marked in both racial and class terms.

In writing about the complex oscillations of race in Eminem's star persona, Hamilton Carroll has associated him with the "production of a traditional narrative of self-sufficiency grounded in the ideologies of possessive individualism and resulting in the acquisition of a compensatory form of celebrity identity." For Carroll, Eminem's "celebratory self-marginalization reproduces as much as it disrupts traditional narratives of socioeconomic self-making" (2011: 109). In a similar fashion the material rewards of Leary and Griffin's success must be either repressed or handled with care if they are to maintain their position as subversive ethnic outsiders or "D-Listers." This class doubleness is in play for Griffin when in her reality series she makes mention of her first-generation Irish-American parents' fondness for jug wine from the comfort of her Los Angeles mansion. In Leary's case, magazine coverage of his luxurious Connecticut estate and his wife Ann's lifestyling website must be held separate from Leary's customary performative mode. There is an occasional jarring contrast, however, as when the Learys' Connecticut property was profiled in the *New York Times's* Great Homes and Destinations series in 2009. Deploying an image repertoire distinctly at odds with the gritty, blue-collar urbanism of Leary's persona, the article paints a portrait of an idyllic country estate with an 1850s farmhouse, horses and dogs (Maker 2009). American Dream rhetoric accumulates through the piece in which Ann attests that "The first thing my husband did when he got famous was buy me a horse," while the text emphasizes Leary's Irish roots, characterizing family dinners with the couple's two children as follows: "In some ways Mr. Leary is continuing a family tradition. He was born in Worcester, Mass., the son of Irish immigrants who drove home an ethic of working hard and never quitting." While perhaps an aberrant piece of publicity from the point of view of Leary and his handlers, such coverage nevertheless assures the viability of the American Dream for the kind of ethnic striving class within which the star more regularly positions himself. For Griffin, the reality television trend for celebrities to build their brand while we watch has been a boon, and her wealth (particularly in the form of her gated Los Angeles mansion) is more integrated into her aspirational schtick and regularly displayed in her reality series; nevertheless a photo of the house on Google Images bears the sardonic caption that "Life on the D List isn't so bad in a \$4 million+ house."

The continual emphasis put by Leary and Griffin on working-class Irish family pasts enables them to stage their material entitlements and "good life" iconicity more openly, and I think it is not incidental that at ages 58 and 55 respectively, Leary and Griffin also personify a new midlife body politics which is organized around the obligation to display fitness and age defiance. This dynamic is not equally gendered; Griffin has been candid about the large amount of plastic surgery she has undergone, while her lollipop figure (large head on a tiny body) and her struggles to attain it have become central to her discursive license to critique entertainment culture.



Figure 22.1 In contrast to a 2013 ad that designated Griffin's body a crime scene, she has labored to ensure her corporeal compliance with Hollywood norms of midlife female visibility (Image from Twitter @kathygriffin)

Leary's fifty-something face contrasts markedly with his body (often displayed in his signature "aging rebel" attire of leather jacket and T-shirt). Leary's midlife body helps to fortify his "authenticity," then, while Griffin's works in tandem with a broader discourse of female plasticity in postfeminist entertainment culture. Notably, such discourse doesn't fundamentally detract from Griffin's "unruly" status and positioning as a kind of social problem; her anti-institutional placement is alluded to, for instance, in the image in figure 22.1, which uses police "caution tape" to symbolically hush up the comedian.

In recent years Leary and Griffin have become associated with a healthism in which their achieved white bodies hold at bay a dysfunctional, undisciplined, even diseased ethnic working-class body. For Griffin this contrast is played out largely in relation to what she deems her mother's alcoholism. Maggie Griffin's fondness for cheap white wine is a staple element in her daughter's comedy, with Maggie making occasional appearances in her daughter's act and inevitably with glass in hand.¹⁰ Griffin's censorious treatment of her mother's drinking has become well known enough to generate spinoff products such as Maggie's guide-to-life book named after what loyal audiences will recognize as her catchphrase *Tip It*. The comical pseudo-memoir uses its title as an alcoholic expression of *joie de vivre*, sourcing Maggie's attitudinal expertise in her Irishness; she grew up, we are told, "in Chicago, the youngest of sixteen children born to Irish immigrant parents."

Griffin's celebrity body represses her history of binge illness and has been touted as an example of healthy lifestyling. A website health piece, "How to train like Kathy Griffin" (eHow 2011), commended the star for replacing candy and cakes with vegetables and whole grains, and detailed how readers could adopt her dieting and

fitness techniques for themselves. Griffin's body is also held up to celebrate her avoidance of an alcohol addiction that she conceptualizes as an ethnic inheritance. As she recounts of an earlier stage of her life in her book *Official Bookclub Selection*, "I also remember thinking, with so much alcoholism and addiction around me, that I didn't need to be starting any vices. An inner voice was telling me, 'How are you not going to become an alcoholic with all these drunken micks around you?'" (2010: 17).

The primary and ancillary texts of Leary's and Griffin's celebrity have consistently linked their Irish roots to the consumption of cheap, processed food. Maggie Griffin's biography for *Tip It* concludes by inviting readers: "So get out your Franzia, stir up some Hamburger Helper and dive in to the world according to Maggie." Leary is an outspoken critic of national obesity and reads it as an expression of a bloated, dysfunctional consumerism. In a promotional piece for his book *Why We Suck* he ruminates: "You're walking down the street in any populated area and you're gonna constantly be thinking things like 'why is that fat fuck wearing those pants?' They're thinking about making seats in automobiles bigger because people are so fucking fat in this country." *Why We Suck* contains a diatribe from Leary about the woman who famously sued McDonald's when she was burned by a cup of coffee. While studiously avoiding the class connotations of his critique, he decries what he imagines is the "hormone-and-chemical-filled food] she eats every single day THREE times a day" because she is busy living a "selfish extended adolescent life" (2009: 4).¹¹ Leary's caricature feels deeply superficial and rote but it typifies the generalizations about American "dumbness" and declinism that have driven his comedy in recent years.

Just as Griffin has been profiled on internet health sites, Leary has been featured in *Men's Health* and was listed among the "25 fittest guys in the world" by the website Men's Fitness in 2010. Leary's address to matters of health and the body has been longstanding, traversing his well-known early 1990s stand-up routine and accompanying book, *No Cure for Cancer*; the suggestion that he had a salubrious influence on his wife, who reports that she reduced her alcohol consumption after their marriage; and his own transformation from a chain-smoking raconteur to a midlife star whose key role links him to the heroic physical exertions of the firefighter.¹² The title of *No Cure for Cancer* alludes to John Wayne's death from lung cancer and to a fantasy detailed by Leary in his routine that when a cure for cancer is found Wayne (and through him a key template for heroic masculinity) might be resurrected. This obliquely syncs up with several references in *Rescue Me* to the premature death of baseball star Mickey Mantle from the physical consequences of alcoholism.

Leary published his book *Why We Suck*, whose subtitle is *A Feel Good Guide to Staying Fat, Loud, Lazy and Stupid*, as *Rescue Me* was intensifying its depiction of Tommy's best friend Lou's overeating and the consequences for his health. In the closing season Lou dies but earlier in that same season his decision to conceal his heart problems endangers the crew and leads directly to an incident in which Tommy's godson "probie" (probationary junior fireman) Damian sustains grave injuries from which he never recovers. Meanwhile, Tommy's ability to establish a modicum of discipline over his own emotions and addictions is a pronounced thematic feature of the series' last season. If *Rescue Me* broadly complies with sociologist Jennifer M. Silva's contention that "in fields such as firefighting that strictly

police the boundaries of masculinity and femininity, there is little to be gained in expressing emotion" (2013), over its series life it increasingly addressed the costs of such repression.

The dynamics of Leary's and Griffin's midlife fame ethnically particularize a phenomenon of far greater scope through which "in the process of advertising and selling the right kind of bodily object through consumption, the bodies of the privileged are legitimated and idealized as moral actors" (Dworkin and Wachs 2009: 11). A point of commonality between them is the way in which an abject Irish immigrant body lurks as an invisible but culturally understood presence behind the achieved, sculpted body of the celebrity. *Rescue Me* serves as an exemplary text in this regard as it continually highlights Tommy Gavin's efforts to sustain his health, contrasting his midlife athleticism to the bloated bodies of his father, Michael, his Uncle Teddy and his best friend, Lou, and situating Tommy's narrowly achieved sobriety in comparison to his spectacularly dysfunctional sister Maggie and alcoholic cousin Mickey. With Griffin, as I have shown, we are made aware of operative contrasts not with a fictional family but her real one, as befits a star who works frequently in "reality" formats. Arguably, it is part of Griffin's "lower" cultural positioning that her real life is rendered transparent, while information about Leary's private life is kept out of the public eye except when the details reflect credit on the star for his altruism and intelligence (his establishment of firefighter charities, his appearance on quiz show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* winning \$125,000 for his foundation) or his wife's literary endeavors (Ann Leary is the author of three books).

Griffin's and Leary's worked-on fifty-something bodies come to be associated with an affluent whiteness and the associated virtues of recovery, personal physical discipline and transcendence of the temptations of alcohol and nicotine. Midlife health is displayed as a prerogative of wealth and outcome of neoliberal self-care, generating a new register for the achievements of postethnic whiteness. Fully adherent to a neoliberal biopolitics, in celebrity culture such bodies operate in implicit counterpoint to the "white trash" and black bodies associated with premature death (Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Amy Winehouse).

Irishness informs the celebrity production of Leary and Griffin with striking consistency. In the realm of stand-up comedy which is their most consistent milieu, it works to explain verbal fluency, lacerating wit and snark, and is obliquely called upon to source the defiant use of expletives, especially the word "suck," as in Griffin's "Suck it" catchphrase and the title of Leary's book. Both consistently call attention to the racial discomfort of millennial American whiteness. Yet the relentless superficiality of the signifiers of Irishness in both Leary's and Griffin's material is striking – theirs is an Irishness seemingly always performed with a sidelong view cast in the direction of what is referenced as a more authentic, secure way of activating racial and working-class legitimacy. In their stage and screen performances Leary and Griffin play the role of the outsider, while their lifestyle imaging substantiates the achieved good life of the insider. The ability of these two stars to selectively activate and strategically monetize their Irishness entails the careful negotiation of a historically abject ethnicity. Nevertheless, this early millennial Irishness makes minoritarian claims that it knows are not fully sustainable

Ruth Barton writes that “Irishness in the United States has become a kind of familiar wallpaper, something that vaguely recalls an era of lower middle-class respectability, a background to more pressing events in the foreground” (2012: 234). I find this characterization largely accurate but not in all contexts and would observe the ubiquity of Irishness as a representational concern in racially charged texts that also address the recalibrations of the early twenty-first century American Dream. As their career trajectories have ascended, I suggest that for Leary and Griffin Irishness has also worked to neutralize volatile class divides and to resolve persistent inequality dilemmas. Leary’s television art depends heavily on a tragic Irishness that Gerardine Meaney, writing about *Rescue Me*’s early seasons, aptly describes in the following terms:

His particular link to the dead, the tragedy of his fidelity to the past and his association with in-between spaces make Tommy Gavin typical of the new image of the Irish American, embodying masculinity as something primal and atavistic, defined by discipline and self-sacrifice, but shadowed by the experience of social and personal fragmentation, random violence and meaningless loss. (2011: 186)

For the most part Leary now sloughs off the tragic tribalism of Irishness in his self-presentation, drawing on it selectively to fortify the values of masculinity and homosociality. Griffin invokes an Irish-inflected tragic family life in her frequent mentions of her alcoholic parents and her deceased brother (when she travels to Ireland in *My Life on the D List* she sprinkles her father’s ashes from a cliff). Both stars ambivalently conceive Irishness as a physically and behaviorally problematic category, yet one which is in some respects still cherished. In these ways, I suggest, they emblemize some of the requirements of an idealized early millennial citizenship that entails a controlled distance from older order working-class white ethnicities which are posited at a historical remove and characterized by an affective ambivalence that is simultaneously transcendent and nostalgic.¹³

In their representations Leary and Griffin stage an Irishness that is co-discursive with a social disappointment that becomes grist for comedic and dramatic performance. And yet the outrage that is so energizing for them is ultimately compliant with both neoliberalism and racial privilege. The class anxieties and concern with “making it” in their comedic and dramatic material must be considered to offer ideological cover for the fact that US cultural mythologies of mass upward mobility are in evident crisis (the American Dream is foreclosed for the undocumented Latinos who comprise a significant proportion of contemporary immigration streams). Leary’s and Griffin’s shared neoliberal ability to manage and control their ethnicity and to celebrate their achievement of an affluent celebrity lifestyle entails working-class caricature and endows whiteness with a certain deniability. They differentiate themselves from their Irish family pasts and obliquely rationalize their success in relation to them; in so doing they obfuscate a vexed early twenty-first century American class politics and disassociate themselves from white privilege.

Notes

I would like to thank Linda Mizejewski and Sinead Molony for their helpful suggestions during the development of this article.

- 1 Ruth Barton (2006) has skillfully delineated typologies of Irish masculinity and femininity in Hollywood. Among the case studies in her book are Brosnan and Byrne.
- 2 I wrote in 2009 that US right-wing commentary culture was “making heavy use of an Irish-inflected American authoritarianism” (Negra 2009: 282). More recently, writing at Salon.com, Andrew O’Hehir (2014) notes that “When you think of the face of white rage in America, it belongs to a red-faced dude on Fox News” and deplores a state of affairs wherein “With Irish-American identity now split between an optional lifestyle accessory and a bunch of unappealing right-wing guys yelling at us, its social justice component has evaporated.” O’Hehir’s assessment drew a predictably volatile response from right-wing media figures seemingly unaware that in their efforts to rebut his points they were substantiating them. For a discussion of another prominent Irish-American characterization on US television, see Barton (2012).
- 3 This is not to suggest, of course, that there aren’t other Irish-inflected celebrities whose personas deserve scrutiny; I’m privileging Leary and Griffin here for their focus on comedy and their comparable career arcs. Alec Baldwin, for instance, the father of a daughter named Ireland and a star whose “loose cannon” status in the media is sometimes obliquely attributed to his Irishness, spent much of the time period I am concerned with here playing Irish-American Jack Donaghy on the NBC sitcom *30 Rock*, where the character’s volatility was marked as an Irish trait (Donaghy even names his fists “St. Patrick” and “St. Michael”). Sean Penn has tended to receive similar treatment to Baldwin, with a focus on his family, substance abuse, and a sense of social justice that is sometimes represented as excessive, hypocritical or perverse. Irishness is a less prevalent but occasional element for stars like Charlie Sheen and George Clooney.
- 4 In an essay analyzing Griffin’s reality TV series *My Life on the D-List* among other focal texts, Heather Osborne-Thompson perceptively notes that “the question of why women appear disproportionately likely to appear on television in comedic formats where they tend to perform their ‘failures’ as women still haunts critical appraisals of their work” (2008: 281).
- 5 A notable difference between the two stars under analysis here is that Griffin has long privileged gay men as a subculture of affinity and target audience while Leary’s anxious comedy of masculinity in *Rescue Me* carries consistent undertones of uncertainty about gay identities in the intimate space of the firehouse. I think Amanda D. Lotz is correct in her assertion that *Rescue Me* is more “befuddled by gay identity and concerned about its detection than threatened by it” (2014: 140).
- 6 I put the term “off whiteness” to extensive use in *Off-White Hollywood* (Negra 2001) and find it helpful in delineating the white ethnicities associated with Euro-American hyphenation.
- 7 Leary’s failed 2001–2 sitcom *The Job* (ABC) rehearsed the thematics of Irish-American masculinity in *Rescue Me*, as arguably did his appearance as a blue-collar police detective in the movie *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999). In the 1995 film *The Matchmaker* Leary plays a cynical Boston political operative who travels to Ireland to help excavate (or, if need be, fabricate) Irish heritage credentials for political candidate Senator McGlory.

- 8 It is beyond my scope to provide a full analysis of *My Life on the D-List* here. However, Heather Osborne-Thompson has usefully contextualized the series by linking it to two other female-centered reality series that also debuted in 2005, noting that all three centralize comedic premises tied to “foregrounding the often humiliating processes by which ‘real’ female comedians attain visibility on television” (2008: 279).
- 9 Such arguments are also taken up in a more local context by Jennifer Nugent Duffy in *Who’s Your Paddy?* (2013), a study of the racial protocols of Irishness in Yonkers, New York.
- 10 Griffin’s use of her mother as a foil character in her comedy resembles but also extends a similar practice by comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres.
- 11 The gratuitous nature of Leary’s critique is suggested by the fact that Stella Liebeck, the plaintiff in the case, was 79 at the time of the incident and highly unlikely to be living an “extended adolescence.”
- 12 In this respect Leary differentiates himself from a set of intensely angry white male comedians of recent decades, many of whom were obese and/or otherwise unhealthy and a number of whom died young, including Chris Farley, Bill Hicks, John Candy, John Belushi and Rodney Dangerfield.
- 13 The relegation of such ethnic collectivities to the historical past was apparent most recently in the mainstream press’s ethnographic “discovery” of the Irish-American beach enclave of Breezy Point, Queens, after Superstorm Sandy in 2012. The vulnerability of the shore community to environmental peril was repeatedly visually rendered through iconographies of grieving women and a pristine Madonna statue poised among the charred remains of homes that had been first battered by the storm and then burned when a fire spread through the area.

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Neymar

Sport Celebrity and Performative Cultural Politics

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Introduction

A national culture is a discourse, a way to construct meanings which influence and organize both our actions and our perceptions of ourselves.

Stuart Hall, "The question of cultural identity"

In this chapter, our aim is to explore the phenomenon of sport celebrity through a critical examination of the celebrity status and influence of the Barcelona and Brazil footballer Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior. Dubbed the "new Pelé" (Ghosh 2013), Neymar is an instructive figure for furthering the understanding of sport celebrity, since he brings to light the importance of the body and embodied performance to the construction and maintenance of sport celebrityhood. As with other forms, the sport celebrity is intertextually constituted and contextually contingent; however, it also relies for its emergence and endurance on unscripted and unpredictable performative dimensions. In other words, bodily expressions and outcomes play an important role in the formation of the sport celebrity. Despite this, relatively little of the voluminous sport celebrity literature has focused on performative dimensions of public individuals, and their relationship to the representation of "collective configurations" of social class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, and nationality that shape popular understandings and experiences of the social world (Marshall 1997: xi). Hence, and focusing largely on issues pertaining to national culture and national identity, we look to examine Neymar as the embodied product and producer of what is a contextually contingent understanding of Brazilian identity.

Beginning with a brief discussion of Brazilian football as an exemplar of sport's conflation with contemporary celebrity culture, we offer an understanding of how normative expectations of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) are reproduced through the performance, representation, and consumption of the *futebol* spectacle, particularly

as expressed through the bodies of celebrated players such as Neymar. This involves an explication of the cultural politics of the performatively based *futebol* discourse responsible for the Brazilianization of the game, and for the representation of select – suitably expressive – celebrated individuals as metonyms for Brazilian society more generally. All of which provides the context for a preliminary discussion of Neymar as the latest iteration of the *futebol*-based Brazilian metonym, which keys on the performative national politics of his celebrityhood.

Celebrated *Brasilidade*

No other country is branded by a single sport, I believe, to the extent that Brazil is by football.

Alex Bellos, *Futebol*

While the centrality of football's place within Brazilian society and culture has been the subject of considerable scholarly and popular examination (cf. Bellos 2002; Castro 2004; DaMatta 2009; M. Filho 1964; Fontes and Hollanda 2014; Goldblatt 2014; Kittleson 2014; Lever 1983; Levine 1980; Milby 2006), the importance of star (or celebrity) players within the process of football's Brazilianization has, in English language publications at least, received less academic attention until relatively recent times (cf. Curi 2013; da Silva 2014; Knijnik 2014). This is somewhat surprising, since the Brazilian *futebol* context represents the epitome of the “celebrity-obsessed culture of new football” (J. Williams 2006: 102), itself an expression of the centrality of the celebrity to, and within, the commercial machinations of the late capitalist sport spectacle (Andrews and Jackson 2001; Smart 2005; Whannel 2001; Wenner 2013). Hence, it is our belief that scrutiny of Brazilian *futebol* can add much to the understanding of the position and influence of celebrity within football culture in particular, and in contemporary sport culture more generally.

The cultural, political, and technological dominance of “the personal, the intimate, and the individual” (Marshall 1997: xiii) associated with the rise of celebrity culture more broadly, has seen the metonymic capacity of singular football “stars” to represent broader collectivities supplant the symbolic value and resonance of team structures. Differently put, Hobsbawm's famous dictum that “the imagined community of nations seems more real as a team of eleven named people” (1990: 143) can be modified to the contemporary context through recourse to the singular star player (the Argentinian Lionel Messi; the Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo; the Brazilian Neymar) to which the national team, and indeed the entire nation become reduced. Within this moment of hyper-football celebrity, the carefully choreographed football star is a potent “representative subjectivity” (source of cultural identification) pertaining to the “collective configurations” (social class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, nationality) that define a society, and through which dominant narratives, ideals, and sensibilities are presented to a mainstream audience (Marshall 1997: xi, xii; Rojek 2006). However, this public presentation of the football celebrity is not realized through a single source (i.e., game coverage). For, even during the visceral

immediacy of a live broadcast, the football star is (re)presented to the consuming audience as an intertextual assemblage. Individuals such as Messi, Ronaldo, and Neymar are intertextually constituted, discursive accumulations of “layer upon layer of mediation” (Whannel 2001: 51), much of which is derived from mutually reinforcing relationships forged with corporate brands (both sporting and nonsporting).

Acknowledging the promotional intertextuality of football stars should not, however, detract from the performative, on-field dimensions which are at the foundational and generative core of football stardom, and which separate football (and sport more generally) from the star systems operating within other culture industries. Football provides a vehicle for the display of seemingly “real individuals participating in unpredictable contexts” and thus “provides the sport celebrity with an important veneer of authenticity, that sets him or her apart from celebrities drawn from other, more explicitly manufactured, cultural realms” (Andrews and Jackson 2001: 8). While a global game, football is simultaneously characterized by localized performative expressions, be they real or imagined, idealized or mythologized (Giulianotti 1999). So, in places such as Brazil, a distinctive vernacular football culture emerged that privileged specific ways of playing, and effected an important role in elevating particular players (those who embodied and expressed this football populism) over others in the hearts and minds of the national populace.

Introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in little more than a few decades, *futebol* became an acknowledged site for the performance of a *corporal populism* through which engrained understandings of Brazilian identity, and indeed Brazilianness (*brasilidade*), were expressed, represented, celebrated, and reproduced (Dulci 2011; Giulianotti 1999; Levine 1980; Maranhão 2007). Of central importance in this process of localizing what was already a global game were the bodies of the *futebol*’s exponents – particularly the star players, or *craque*, who graced the professional game, but also members of the anonymous masses practicing their skills in impromptu games played on Brazil’s beaches, barren fields and floodplains (*várzea*), and in its crowded urban environs (*favela*). However, it was not simply the playing of the game that came to signify *brasiliadade*. Rather, there emerged normative expectations of a distinctive *futebol* style or aesthetic associated with, and evocative of, what it means to be Brazilian, the performance of which – at whatever level of the game – is discerned and celebrated as a marker of national distinction: a valorization of specific uses and expressions of *futebol* that evokes, and thereby naturalizes, established assumptions regarding the embodied practices of being Brazilian. According to this line of thought, and paraphrasing Hobsbawm (1990), the feeling of being Brazilian is never felt as more real, nor reproduced more effectively than in the collective affirmation that attends the fluid execution of a *futebol* skill, such as the *pedalada* (step over) or *caneta* (nutmeg). At such moments, the assembled and viewing throng are seemingly confronted with proof positive of Brazilians’ “innate possession of a ‘creative and talented’ corporality” that, in however essentializing and reifying a fashion, provokes the confirmation of popular understandings of Brazilian national identity, while distinguishing it from other national football cultures (i.e., those not possessing or exhibiting the same “naturalized ... corporal talent”) (Guedes 2014).

Bolstered by the numerous successes of the *seleção nacional* (national team) in international competitions during the second half of the twentieth century, the Brazilian *futebol* style has been normalized and naturalized within the national imaginary. This has been realized, at least in part, through a frequent extolling by the media and political constituencies of those players exhibiting the requisite “talent, inventiveness, and improvisation” required of the mythologized Brazilian *jogo bonito* (beautiful game) (Guedes 2014). As a result of their ability to emit sufficient levels of *futebol*-inflected corporal populism, specific individuals (ranging from early figures such as Friedenreich, Leônidas and Domingos, through Garrincha, Didi, Pelé, Jairzinho, Rivelino, Sócrates, and Zico, to more recent icons such as Rivaldo, Ronaldo, Carlos Alberto, Ronaldinho, Kaká, Robinho, and, more contemporaneously, Neymar) have – to varying degrees, in differing ways, and often-times retrospectively – been discursively positioned as nationally representative *futebol* subjects. These widely celebrated players offer the expectant masses putatively authentic personifications of nation and nationality. They thereby function as metonymic configurations that reify Brazil and its population, the diversity and complexity of Brazilian society becoming reduced to the bodies and performances of the idolized few. The Brazilian masses are, as a consequence, able to derive a sense of national community, identification, and pride through the enthusiastic consumption, or simply through the passive recognition, of these nationally suggestive players (DaMatta 2009).

Futebol as Art

The agile but delicate foot of capoeira, of the samba dancer, of the soccer player, place Brazilian technique closer to a Dionysian dance than to the Apollonian British style.

Gilberto Freyre, quoted by Hollanda

At the root of Brazilian expressions of the national *futebol* self are a series of performance-based oppositions – what Pablo Albarces referred to as “loci of opposition” (quoted in Guedes 2014), against which a burgeoning awareness of *brasileidade* became defined and experienced through embodied practice. A sense of Brazilian identity through *futebol* was initially provoked in opposition to the English originators of the sport in its modern form; subsequently against the social elites who dominated the early decades of the game in Brazil; and, more recently, in contradistinction to that characterized as the *European* style of play (Hollanda 2011; Levine 1980; Maranhão 2007). In a similar vein to other expressions of Brazilian corporal populism (i.e., *capoeira*, *samba*, and *carnival*), *futebol*’s oppositionality has thus been rooted in a vernacular resistance against the perceived authority variously expressed through Anglo, social elite, and latterly European ways of both administering and playing the game. As Gilberto Freyre famously noted, lauding the distinctively expressive, creative, and individualistic qualities of Brazilian soccer displayed during the 1938 World Cup:

Our football style seems to contrast with the European one due to an amount of qualities such as surprise, skill, cleverness, speed and, at the same time, individual brilliance and spontaneity that express the same Mulatism of Nilo Peçanha, who was the greatest name in Politics. Our passes, our catches, our misleads, our floridness with the ball ... there is something that reminds one of dancing and capoeira, making the Brazilian way of playing football a trademark, which sophisticates and often sweetens the game invented by the English and played so stiffly by them. (Quoted in Maranhão 2007: 514)

In explaining the fundamental differences between Brazilian and European football, Freyre invoked the Dionysian (emotional, creative, and individualistic: beauty-driven) and Apollonian (rational, structured, and instrumental: reason-driven) binary. In doing so, he helped establish the persuasive dichotomy between Brazilian *futebol-arte* as “a sort of dance, in which the person is prominent and shines,” and *futebol-força* wherein “personal action is mechanized and subordinated” (Freyre, quoted in Maranhão 2007: 515). Despite, or perhaps because of, being rooted in essentialized understandings of nationally based cultural, ethnic, and biological difference, this contrast proved influential in shaping popular understandings of the Brazilian *futebol* self (and, indeed the generalized European football Other from which it is oppositionally derived) (E. Filho et al. 2013).

Somewhat contradictorily, Freyre complicated this dichotomous thought through reference to the concept of the “mulatto nation” (Vargas 2013: 466). Comprised, in Freyre’s terms, of a blending of “European intellect” and “Afro-Brazilian primitivism” (Maranhão 2007: 516), the mulatto Brazil seemingly provided compelling evidence of modern Brazil’s racial and societal superiority; specifically when compared with the entrenched and disabling racial segregation characteristic of the United States. Freyre’s pro-miscegenation ideology contrasted starkly with established thought among Brazil’s white elite, the majority of whom routinely positioned black, native, and mestizo populations as being responsible for the nation’s perceived inferiority, and therefore “craved ... for population whitening” through increased rates of immigration from Europe (Maranhão 2007: 513). Most famously in his “Foot-ball mulato” piece written for the national news agency *Diários Associados*, Freyre (1938) exalted “the flamboyant Mulatism and the trickery which are nowadays part of the true affirmation of what Brazil is” (quoted in Maranhão 2007: 514), as exhibited by the 1938 *seleção*, and in the more established Brazilian practices, such as *samba* and *capoeira*, all of which Freyre characterized as the agile but delicate “little foot of the mulatto” (Freyre, quoted in Hollanda 2011).

Freyre’s repeated allusion to the *capoeira-futebol* relation is evidence of an important performative dimension of the process whereby Brazilian *futebol-arte* became differentiated from European *futebol-força*. An Afro-Brazilian melding of martial art and dance, *capoeira* has generated a highly localized popular physical vocabulary whose form and symbolism are thought to have seeped into other aspects of Brazilian culture, including *futebol*. At its most basic, *capoeira* is a form of physical combat, or *jogo* (game in the vernacular), between two individuals situated within a *roda* (circle formed by watching participants). Within the *roda*, the *capoeiristas* “intertwine their bodies using swaying dance steps called ginga;

improvise strikes with their head, hands and feet; and force spontaneous, acrobatic escapes" (Joseph 2012: 1079). Dating back to the sixteenth century, *capoeira* is considered to be simultaneously an "extension" of African physical cultural practices, as reworked through their "invention" within the context of the new world that was Portuguese colonial Brazil. *Capoeira* (originally referred to as *capoeiragem*) was initially prevalent within parts of Brazil that were key nodes of the African slave trade (particularly Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Salvador), and was experienced as a quasi-religious, ethnically redolent, leisure pursuit by the enslaved masses (Joseph 2012: 1081). By the late nineteenth century, *capoeiras* – criminal and violent gangs of *capoeira* exponents, made up of underemployed blacks and mulattos – proved to be significant sources of social and moral panic for the respectable and refined denizens (read: white) of Brazilian society.

While late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Brazilian authorities waged a concerted, and often violent, campaign against the *capoeiras*, other elements of society – particularly romantic folklorists and progressive modernist intellectuals, each looking for the cohesive essences of Brazilian society – began to eulogize *capoeira* as a form of "national gymnastics," or "national calisthenics." As a result, it became co-opted as part of a broader project to symbolically and physically constitute a "unique national character" in the minds and bodies of the Brazilian citizenry (Downey 2002: 2). *Capoeira's* combination of strength and stamina, with expressive and creative – yet instrumental – forms of physical agility, was thus positioned as an important performative dimension in the establishment of the *imagined community* (Anderson 2006) of the Brazilian nation, and it is evident how this national popular physical vocabulary subsequently informed the evolution of expressions and perceptions of a distinctively Brazilian *futebol* style.

At the performative core of *capoeira* is the reliance upon, and celebration of, corporal improvisation as realized through the successful enactment of body movements and deceptions as responses to emergent situations (Hollanda 2011; Stanyek 2011). Hence, the discourse of *capoeira* became easily transposed to the *futebol* context, where, among numerous other terms, *ginga* (the rhythmic movement of the body from side to side in an attempt to creatively deceive an opponent, and the core element of *capoeira*) and *jogo de cintura* (a literal translation being the waist game, but pointing to the need for physical and mental flexibility) took on added resonance and relevance within the Brazilian psyche. The linkage with *capoeira* also drew the nationally representative, if mythologized, *malandro* into the *futebol* realm. As Milby noted, "Capoeira is a body philosophy that applauds the tricking of the opponent, and features much of the characteristics of the *malandro* within it" (2006: 340). Very loosely translated, *malandro* refers to a lower-class rogue, a trickster, forever seeking to derive maximal pleasure and joy from his existence (for the *malandro* is inveterately male), through creative and imaginative responses to the adverse situations with which he is confronted, with little recourse to those in authority or the rules they try to impose (DaMatta 1991; Parker 2009). As discussed in the following section, the very expressive and individualistic nature of Brazilian *futebol* rendered it a seemingly natural expression and extension of *malandragem* (the practice or lifestyle of the *malandro*). Not that *futebol* players were necessarily

capoeiristas; however, they “came from a culture that admired grace and trickery,” and so tried to exhibit on the playing field what was socially valued (Kuper 2006: 240). Furthermore, the effusive outpourings of sports journalists similarly lauded expressions of *malandragem* within the *futebol* context, and so helped promulgate the “invented tradition that the spirit of the malandro must exist in Brazilian soccer” (Milby 2006: 111), *futebol* becoming ever more conclusively centralized within the national imagination.

The conflation of *capoeira* discourse, practices, and subjectivities with *futebol* certainly proved instrumental in the Brazilianization of the game. According to some commentators, the influence of *capoeira* upon *futebol* – in Raymond Williams’s terms, the partial co-option of an emergent sporting practice by a dominant one (1977) – “gave rise to the beautiful, flowing game called o jogo bonito and characterized by a fast, rhythmic attacking style football with elements of individual creativity and team choreography” (Silva et al. 2010). However, rather than any direct transposition between performative domains, it is our contention that *capoeira* (and *samba*) provided a framework of distinctly “Brazilian movement patterns” that indirectly informed (as opposed to directly prescribed) the performance and reception of *futebol* within the Brazilian context (Silva et al. 2010). Hence, the performance of particular players, and even the execution of specific moves, became articulated to and through this popular *movement* discourse, and thereby became the embodied expressions of Brazilian national culture, lauded as such across the nation’s media, and reproduced within its vernacular spaces.

Neymar to the Rescue

Agility, dribbling, step overs, joy ... The missing ingredients to the Brazilian team are back.

Leandro Canônico, “Futebol é alegria!”

Freyre advanced the understanding of Brazilian society as being a vibrant and successful racial democracy, seemingly embodied for all to witness through the joyous and triumphant (especially at the 1970 World Cup tournament) *futebol mulato* played by the racially diverse constituents of the *seleção* (Maranhão and Knijnik 2011). However, the notion of Brazil as a racial democracy is nothing more than a reassuring myth for Brazil’s white establishment, if a resilient and influential one at that (Twine 1998). First widely disseminated with the 1933 publication of *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (*The Masters and the Slaves*, Freyre 1986), Freyre’s understandings of racial democracy keyed on the “harmonious coexistence and lifestyles” between the various racial groupings within Brazil that rendered race an irrelevance, and racism an impossibility, within contemporary society (Afolabi 2009: 3). As with other mobilizations of color-blind racial politics (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011), such allusions to racial harmony merely obscured enduring race-based hierarchies and inequities, and covertly contributed to the maintenance of white positions and structures of authority within

Brazil (Telles 2004; Twine 1998). In light of this, the celebration of the *seleção* – long dominated by black and mulatto players – and the “flamboyant Mulatism” expressed on the field of play (Freyre 1938, quoted in Maranhão 2007: 514), contributed to the negation, and hence perpetuation, of the race-based inequities that iconic figures such as Pelé, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, and Neymar seemingly disavowed.

Complicating the issue further, Vargas advances the argument that the representation of the *seleção* as the bastion of Freyre’s *futebol mulato* is itself a falsehood. Rather than being an incontrovertible space for the celebration of the success of Brazil as a truly multicultural project, Vargas identifies how the *seleção* often reinforces the, at best, contingent position of those from “black and mix-race backgrounds” within Brazilian society as a whole (2013: 470). While winning, the team’s diverse racial composition is routinely articulated in the popular media as a source of cultural and stylistic differentiation, *futebol* preeminence, and national pride. However, at times when the team fails to live up to the nation’s elevated expectations, *futebol* failure proves the catalyst for the rejuvenation of long-held, and barely submerged, antiblack rhetoric pertaining to black people’s “always already-known ... incompatibility with work, rationality, order, and indeed the nation” (Vargas 2013: 471). According to this logic, just as the presence of large populations of black and mixed-race people were primarily responsible for Brazilian society’s underdevelopment more generally, so this population’s predominance within the *seleção*, and the improvisational exuberance of *futebol mulato*, were the causes of the nation’s failings upon the world football stage. Hence, the *seleção* becomes a metaphor for the nation’s multiracial uniqueness which is, at the same time, perceived as the source of its inveterate deficiencies. This brings to light the conundrum of the nonwhite Brazilian footballer, whose creative and individualistic playing style is “valued yet suspect; celebrated yet often taken as reason for Brazil’s seemingly perpetual underdevelopment” (Vargas 2013: 466).

Far from being undeviating exponents of the Brazilian predilection for *o jogo bonito*, Brazilian national team administrations have periodically adopted the rational instrumentality of the European *futebol-força* approach, oftentimes as an antidote to the perceived debilitating excesses of *futebol-arte*. For example, a contemporaneous review of the Brazilian triumph at the 1958 World Cup fully acknowledged that: “The championship delegation buried the era of improvisation and messiness (*improviso e bagunça*) – led by Paulo Machado de Carvalho, they were organized, efficient and prudent. It’s a lesson for the entire country” (Stanyek 2011). More recently, during the tenure of Dunga (Carlos Caetano Bledorn Verri) as the Brazilian national coach, from 2006 to 2010, the *seleção* adopted a more structured and predictable *European* approach, which relied upon an anti-*malandro* ethic prefigured on work rate, commitment, and dedication, as opposed to trickery, invention, and talent. In doing so, Dunga was widely pilloried for ushering in an era of anti-Brazilian *futebol*. For instance, Carlos Torres Alberto, the captain of the winning side at the 1970 World Cup, publicly castigated Dunga’s team for not being “worthy of the greatest traditions of Brazilian soccer, a soccer of drib[b]le, imagination, creativity and improvisation” (Stanyek 2011).

Not surprisingly, given Dunga's preference for form and structure over *improviso e bagunça*, Neymar was not selected for the national team during his managerial reign. Nonetheless, his consistently outstanding displays for Santos – and particularly the exhilarating skill he routinely displayed – saw him championed by the popular press as the corrective-in-waiting to Dunga's anti-Brazilian *futebol* ethos: an ethos embodied by the much vilified Felipe Melo, depicted in a promotional film by the Brazilian beer brand Brahma as *O Dunga do Dunga* (The Dunga of Dunga). As his career unfolded, and although a telegenic visage and natural persona were contributory factors, Neymar's ascent to the rarified status of Brazilian *futebol* icon was primarily attributable to the nature of his performances for club and country, wherein he exhibited a mastery of the techniques of corporal improvisation on which perceptions and expectations of Brazilian *futebol-arte* are based.

From the earliest stages of his career in the media spotlight, Neymar's playing ability and performances became articulated with, and through, the popular movement discourse at the interpretive core of Brazilian *futebol* culture. As a phenomenon playing in the youth section of the Santos FC Futsal at 12 and 13 years old, Neymar was introduced to the general public in numerous television profiles as a prodigiously skilled and exciting young player, and potential successor to then Santos legend, Robinho. These early profiles focused largely on Neymar's dribbling prowess, an expected and iconic feature that helps define the *futebol-arte* credentials of an individual (Amaro 2013; Cruz 2012). This is because dribbling necessitates utilizing the deceptive and improvisational practices of the *futebol malandro*: *ginga* (rhythmic swinging movements from side to side) and *jogo de cintura* (physical and mental flexibility). As he progressed through the professional ranks at Santos, Neymar drew parallels with Garrincha, a Brazilian *futebol* icon from the 1950s and 1960s for whom "the joy of football didn't come with scoring goals, or winning games or even making money ... For Garrincha, the fun was dribbling. Just dribbling" (Castro 2004: 45). While media portrayals certainly depicted Neymar as being more materially and instrumentally inclined than Garrincha, they habitually replicated the joyful irreverence and rogue-like trickery associated with the "archetypal *Malandro* soccer player" (Kuper 2006: 239) in personalizing profiles of Brazil's burgeoning superstar:

Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior turned 18 last month and is already making some noise. In these early months of the year, he came on the scene in Brazilian football so vibrantly because of his talent and an irreverent way of conducting the ball, which left names like Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos, Adriano, Marcelo Paraíba, Diego Souza, in the background. The number 17 of Santos played so many pranks with the ball there was no room for anyone else. At the beginning of the week, Pelé stated that if he were Dunga, he would take the boy to the World Cup. (Knoploch 2010: 45)

However, unlike many fledgling stars seemingly on the cusp of greatness, Neymar's high-profile exploits for Santos (such as winning the Campeonato Paulista, the Copo do Brasil, and most notably, the Copa Libertadores) and latterly the Brazilian national and Olympic teams corroborated his comprehensive appropriation by the corporate tentacles of promotional culture (Wernick 1991). In addition to the

popular media's obsessive interest in his exploits on and off the field, Neymar's myriad endorsement relationships, and hence advertising opportunities/obligations, include Nike, Panasonic, Unilever, Volkswagen, Santander, Mentos, Claro, Tenys Pé Baruel, Lupo, Baterias Heliar, and Guarana Antarctica. In combination, these led to Neymar becoming – and indeed remaining, even following his 2013 transfer to FC Barcelona – a ubiquitous feature of Brazilian popular culture.

As Vargas noted, the *seleção* is a “privileged discursive field” (2013: 469), and one affording its constituent elements (players) heightened national cultural prominence and resonance, compared with solely playing for their club side. This was certainly the case with Neymar. On the occasion of his long-awaited debut for the national team – scoring in a 2–0 victory against the United States in what was then Mano Menezes's first game after succeeding Dunga as national team manager – the Brazilian media effusively declared Neymar the savior of the *Brazilian* game:

The dribble made a new debut in the national team within 23 minutes of the first half at New Jersey. It was when Neymar carried the ball down the left side toward the goal-line. The full back, Spector, tried to tackle him and almost broke his spine after Neymar suddenly stopped, grabbed the ball from his left foot to the right, and went freely toward the penalty area. (Coelho 2010: D3)

Further commentary hailed the “new generation of Brazilian football” which, vanguarded by Neymar, “achieved the promise of art-football” so absent under the Dunga regime (*O Globo* 2010). Lastly, if ever conclusive confirmation was needed of Neymar's status as a representative, and indeed redemptive, figure for Brazilian *futebol* culture, this can be discerned in the Ouse Ser Brasileiro (Dare to be Brazilian) advertisement developed as part of Nike Football's marketing campaign for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. This commercial “turns football into art – through music and the unique Brazilian style of playing football” (GlobeOne 2014), and depicts various players expected to feature prominently at the World Cup as representatives of key elements of Brazilian *futebol* culture: they are *daring to be Brazilian*.

In the commercial, and starting at the outset of what appears to be the World Cup final, Thiago Silva is transported back to 1920s Brazil and, in the guise of the classic *malandro*, sweeps the ball away from an onrushing opponent; Paulinho picks up the ball in a neighborhood *pelada* (pickup game) played on a brown and dusty pitch, dribbles through the opposition and hits the bar with an inventive shot (while a seated Ronaldo looks on admiringly); the ball then rebounds into the World Cup game, this time played between junior representatives of the competing nations, one of which, a curly headed youngster, transforms into a cartoon version of David Luiz, who utilizes his unusual combination of deft artistry and physical magnitude to save a seemingly certain goal; the physical tables are then turned, as the diminutive Bernard successfully dribbles through a forest of gargantuan opponents; finally, the ball arrives on Neymar's chest, as he is transported from the stadium to a barefooted game on the beach. Neymar then proceeds to demonstrate his full repertoire of *ginga* and *jogo de cintura* that propels him through his opponents, past a floundering goalkeeper, to place the ball into an unattended goal. At this moment, the

beach scene is replaced with the stadium, where Neymar is being mobbed by the rest of the team and acclaimed by the adoring fans. Here Neymar dared to be Brazilian, and in concert with his teammates demonstrated *Ninguém Joga Como a Gente* (Nobody Plays Like Us), as he wins the World Cup for the adoring nation in a fashion that banished Dunga's *futebol-força* from the collective memory. This was Nike's prophesied crowning of the *Neymar age*.

Foot Soldier of Neoliberalismo

Neymar is a contemporary hero, wrought by our time.

Fausto Amaro, "Corpo, mídia e futebol"

As nationally representative subjects, the cultural meaning and significance of football stars is constituted out of the broader societal context they simultaneously help to constitute (as a result of their popular cultural presence, reach, and influence). This is evidently true of the specificities of popular movement (football) discourse, through which players are normatively judged, and thereby rendered understandable, according to local performative preferences and expectations: normative preferences and expectations they subsequently reproduce through their ascension to the status of acknowledged football star. The dialectic nature of football stardom is, however, equally apparent in other realms of cultural politics, not simply the performative. Hence, Brazilian *futebol* stars such as Neymar are – in Patricia Hill Collins's (2000) terms – necessarily intersectional constructs which contribute to popular understandings and experiences of, among other subject categories, class, gender, sexuality, and nation (Dyer 1986; Marshall 1997). Rather than examining any of these vital issues within this necessarily abbreviated discussion, our focus is more general and concentrates on understanding the mutually constitutive articulation linking Neymar and the broader political agenda in contemporary Brazil. In other words, our aim is to examine the politicization of Neymar within the context of Brazil's incumbent ideologies of governance.

The politicization of Brazil's football icons is clearly nothing new; the 18-year-old Pelé's model military service in the Brazilian army provided political publicists with the perfect opportunity for enhancing the public perception of the military. Clearly a compliant personage, in 1972 Pelé tacitly endorsed Brazil's authoritarian military dictatorship, by denying its very existence. In his own words, "There is no dictatorship in Brazil. Brazil is a liberal country, a land of happiness. We are a free people. Our leaders know what is best for [us], and govern [us] in a spirit of toleration and patriotism" (quoted in Levine 1980: 244). Clearly, Brazil's contemporary political formation differs greatly from the dictatorial regime of the early 1970s; nonetheless Neymar appears an equally validating figure – if an unwitting one – whose very presence in the public realm bolsters the ideological underpinnings of the political status quo. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (popularly referred to as Lula) was swept into power on a populist wave of anti-neoliberal sentiment, and while his administration (2003–11) certainly enacted wide-ranging socialist reforms in certain areas of

Brazilian life, the economy was not one of them. Rather, “once the realities of modern nation-state governance set in ... the Lula regime opted for a more conciliatory attitude toward neoliberal policies” aimed at nurturing, as opposed to derailing, the free-market, corporate-friendly, and privatizing reforms enacted by his predecessor, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2003) (Clift and Andrews 2012: 214). These reforms, while unpopular among the Brazilian left, were nonetheless widely considered to be the catalyst for the transformation of Brazil’s productive and consumer culture, and the subsequent elevation of the nation’s place in the global economy (Brainard and Martinez-Diaz 2009; Carrasco and Williams 2012). Hence, Lula and his successor, President Dilma Rousseff (2011–present), have been compelled to fuse elements of the socialist underpinnings of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, the Workers’ Party) with an overriding neoliberal economic agenda (Fortes 2009). Hence, Chossudovsky’s 2003 critique of Lula’s administration is equally applicable today: “Beneath the surface and behind the Workers Party’s populist rhetoric, the neoliberal agenda under Lula remains functionally intact” (Chossudovsky 2013).

As the product of a neoliberalizing Brazil, it is wholly unsurprising that Neymar’s public persona should be articulated according to, and through, neoliberal logics. Not that – as the Lula-Rousseff compromise indicates – neoliberalism can be considered a global economic and/or ideological monolith. Rather, neoliberalism’s various dimensions are mobilized, and in some cases resisted, in differing permutations, and to differing effects, depending upon the contingencies of the local context (Macdonald and Ruckert 2009). It is a flexible technology of governance appropriated in different ways, by different political formations, whether democratic, communist, or authoritarian (Ong 2006). However, a common feature of neoliberal projects, particularly those within democratic national settings, is the centrality of notions of individualism as the ideological cornerstone of neoliberal economic (re)formations. As Gilbert noted, “neoliberalism understands individual interests to be largely mutually exclusive, self-interest to be the only motive force in human life and competition to be the most efficient and socially beneficial way for that force to express itself” (2013: 9). Heavily informed by this ideology of competitive individualism, popular media discourse thus construct representations of public individuals, such as Neymar, as celebrated, and therefore idealized, subjects whose individual attributes (i.e., determination, fortitude, responsibility) have provided them, regardless of their social origins, with access to the economic and consumerist benefits that demarcate individualized success within the neoliberal capitalist system (Marshall 1997; Miller 2007). Hence, although by no means an overtly political figure, popular and commercial representations of Neymar, on and off the playing field, routinely depict him (and in doing so covertly neoliberalize him) as a consummately competitive individual, clearly benefiting from a steadfast commitment to his own self-interest and betterment.

Popular representations of Neymar as a seductive emissary of the neoliberal order are most readily apparent within the advertising realm. This can be attributed to the fact that “commercials are part of the discursive production system of capitalist societies, and as such, are carriers of social representations of a society in which they are addressed and were designed” (Edison Gastaldo, quoted in Amaro

2013: 5). To be sure, many of the commercial representations of Neymar place him in (semi)ludicrous settings and scenarios in order to accentuate, and capitalize upon, his youthful smile and persona in a manner that borders on infantilization. This is what Amaro (2013) refers to as the utilization of Neymar's *moleque* (mischievous boy) style. However, in the neoliberal context, representations of Neymar as *moleque* can also be likened to the Argentinian concept of *pibe* (the young, impoverished, free-spirited footballer) who, through the force of their own will and imagination, develops *criollo* (a skillful and individualistic style of play) (Archetti 2001). Indeed, a commercial for Santander neatly integrates notions of youthful joy and creativity with the competitive individual in recreating "Neymars"/*Neymares* as neoliberal *moleques*. Sitting on a swivel chair in what appears to be the Santos trophy room, Neymar recounts:

A lot of people in Brazil are realizing that is worth investing in happiness
 It is possible to enjoy your own talent
 Be serious, without dismissing your childish personality
 Just for fun, let's call these people "Neymars"
 Corporations, universities and streets are full of these guys
 People of all ages
 Aren't you one of them?
 There is success in every single Brazilian
 And Santander is with you to make it happen
 Giving support, so you can raise your own trophies
Neymar: Santander and you
Woman (Santander employee): Together, making it happen

Here Santander acts as neoliberal conduit, providing "every single Brazilian" with the opportunity to be a success, realize their talent, be a Neymar, should they join them and commit to the project of self-betterment. In a Panasonic commercial, Neymar even adopts the mantle of explicit (neoliberal) public pedagogue. Having tied his laces, Neymar stands on a muddy pitch and casts a seething stare at a group of children blocking his path to goal. He then repeatedly dribbles through them on the way to scoring numerous goals, while his voiceover explains:

The experiences I got in my childhood made me who I am
 Even the small things are connected to your dreams
 Everything depends on your determination

The phrases "Challenge yourself" (*Desafie a si mesmo*) and "Grab your dreams" (*agarre seus sonhos*) are then displayed, as the triumphant Neymar stares, with one foot on the ball, at the defeated and disconsolate children, who suddenly reenergize and chase after the ball once again. Clearly, this group has internalized Neymar's "ideas for life."

Within many of his appearances on television commercials, Neymar is displayed as the epitome of neoliberal personhood: a status less derived from overt expressions of Brazilian cultural citizenship than from displays of (globally) branded material

consumption (Miller 2007). As such, he is positioned as exhibiting a consumerist lifestyle to which the audience is encouraged to aspire. Despite being an aspirational icon (and thereby an inspiration for consumers), Neymar's public image is nonetheless rooted in Brazilian public culture: his celebrated rise from the anonymity of the Brazilian masses incorporates a recognition of the challenging social environment, and associated *futebol* style, that propelled him on his populist journey to self-betterment. This is clearly illustrated in a Nike commercial depicting Neymar's impromptu visit to a *bairro* (urban community/neighborhood), where he is met with great enthusiasm, while publicizing the Nike's Bairro Brasil campaign. Neymar narrates:

This is not just another tournament
 It's a cultural clash
 A battle of styles
 Between the ones who play and the ones who live football
 Winning is not enough
 We have to take over the game
 With "Art football" and fatal precision
 We can be the guests
 But we won't be kind
 We are not here for fun
 k We are here to take back what is ours by right
 Tell the neighbors that "the owner of the place" has arrived
 Because it doesn't matter where you come from
 The continent is ours.

Here is the returning hero, seemingly revisiting his space and culture of origin, in a manner that celebrates both while furthering Neymar's popular aura as the exemplar of the rags-to-riches narrative that underpins neoliberalism's politics of individual hope. In this, as in the other promotional representations, Neymar's Brazil is a neoliberal Brazil.

Conclusion

Futebol is a sport and a machine, which socializes people in Brazil.

Roberto DaMatta, "Sport in society"

Neymar – or more accurately his intertextually and contextually constructed imaged identity – is both a compelling and an influential representative subject of the contemporary Brazilian conjuncture. Through various media and promotional texts, Neymar's performative practice, style of play, and public persona have been framed and presented to the Brazilian populace in such a way as to render him complicit in the articulation of national sensibilities, narratives, and subjectivities through which Brazilian commercial culture imagines and idealizes itself. As such, before and during the 2014 World Cup, internal and external media constituencies alike habitually

positioned Neymar as the contemporaneous embodiment of the *futebol-arte* at the constitutive core of the “mulatto nation” (Vargas 2013: 466). Framed as a nationally representative *futebol* subject, Neymar thus expressed his very *brasileidade* (Brazilianness) through every mediated execution of corporal fluidity, creativity, improvisation, and trickery. Of course, Neymar’s experience at the 2014 World Cup tournament underscored the precarious nature of sporting performance. Having been the single expressive spark in earlier games in which the rest of the Brazilian team were distinctly lackluster and devoid of creativity, Neymar’s tournament was brought to a shuddering halt by serious injury in the quarter-final game against Colombia. This provided commercial and political constituencies with clear opportunities to identify, and empathize, with the fallen national hero. Hence, President Dilma Rousseff took this opportunity to bolster her diminishing popular appeal (doubtless aware of the need to engineer political capital before presidential elections scheduled for October 2014) by expressing the care and concerns of the nation in an open letter to “our beloved Neymar,” delivered, among other means, via social media: “The pain on your face yesterday at the Castelao stadium broke my heart and that of all Brazilians ... But what we saw, too, was the extraordinary force of a great warrior who does not get beaten, though wounded” (Maese 2014).

Furthermore, even while recovering from injury, the performative basis of Neymar’s cultural centrality was underscored by numerous commentators, who opined that the team without Neymar that meekly capitulated to Germany in the semifinal defeat exhibited a form of inferior *futebol-força*, ignominiously brushed aside by the physically, technically, and strategically superior Germans (Motta 2014). In Nike’s terms, the game was less a Brazilian celebration of the fact that Nobody Plays Like Us, and more the occasion for a media-driven national introspection concerning why so few Brazilians seemingly now play like Neymar (i.e., by living up to the localized performative preferences and expectations of Brazil’s *futebol* public). If anything, Brazil’s 7–1 defeat against Germany, albeit in unexpected fashion, confirmed this as the *Neymar age*.

Once the reinvigorator, after the 2014 World Cup, Neymar has subsequently been cast as the prototypical redeemer of Brazilian *futebol*, and thereby society. However, and as Helal et al. (2011) noted, while a nationally resonant and representative figure, Neymar’s derivation as a popular celebrity encompasses and mobilizes *universal* as well as Brazilian elements. While the cultural presence and prominence of Neymar may animate contemporaneous debates and understandings pertaining to the nature of Brazil and Brazilianness, it simultaneously naturalizes and normalizes neoliberal agendas and ideologies, allowing them to stealthily inhabit popular consciousness, with apparently little or no recognition of, or resistance to, their politicizing function. The commercial celebration of Neymar’s creative and competitive individualism is indivisible from the flexible technology of *Brazilian* neoliberal governance (Ong 2006). Hence, in the present conjuncture, Neymar is, at one and the same time, both the “poster boy” of the *seleção* (Vickery 2014), and the “human face” of Brazilian neoliberalism (Chossudovsky 2013). Indeed, if sporting mega-events are neoliberal Trojan Horses (Zirin 2014) then Neymar can be considered the modern-day Odysseus, leading the infiltration and normalization of neoliberal

sensibilities within Brazilian cultural spaces and populations. Of course, the combination of Neymar's telegenic smile, endearing affability, and *futebol* style largely protect his imaged identity from widespread criticism (with intermittent expressions of anti-Neymar sentiment becoming subsumed under the welter of popular affect). The same cannot be said for the inanimate edifices of the 2012 Confederations Cup, the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, each of which has proved to be a rallying point for popular protest against wider neoliberal policies. Meanwhile, the ongoing reification of Neymar ensures his widespread popular approval, even at a time of anti-neoliberal ferment. Such are the protections afforded those who hold the public's hopes and aspirations at their feet.

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Digital Shimmer

Popular Music and the Intimate Nexus between Fan and Star

Toija Cinque

The conception of “star performance” through popular music is stratified, which generates diverse and often contradictory forms of thought. For example, stars and celebrities plausibly act as a “culture medium” in which, through imagination, one’s identity is assembled, realized or constructed. What to become and how to be are questions we individually and collectively contend with throughout our lives to varying degrees (Maslow 1954; 1968). The predominant use of digital technologies has meant that the delivery of sound is much altered. Recorded music, be it Giuseppe Verdi’s *La Traviata* or Iron Maiden’s *The Number of the Beast*, once sourced via analog legacy devices such as “old-school” tape cassette or vinyl record, is now a series of ones and zeros. Advocates argue that the key benefits of digitization are the ability to compress data, because sound generates large files of information, and the subsequent capacity for data to move across platforms, no longer constrained by geography or device. The discourse of digitization begs the question of how a series of ones and zeros, albeit in a plethora of configurations, registers with listening bodies and affects “the sublime.”

It is without doubt that some musical experiences afford indescribable, unlocatable sensations – even enchantment (as defined by Bennett 2001: 5 and called forth by Redmond: 2014: 126). Such musical experiences might happen in the presence of the performer, or in their absence, as in the case of recorded music. In this context, any sense of “real” space and place is less definitive, allowing for “special encounters” to be imagined and felt. For these reasons, music and all that the use of the word might convey – the proposed notion of phaino-ken here – acts as the lens through which to examine the meaning and value of celebrity/star embodiment. Here I distinguish “star” from “celebrity” using Stevenson’s definition whereby “stars are popular figures that last,” they are “extra-ordinary” people to look up to (2006: 2); and Marshall’s explanation that someone achieves stardom through a special textual performance such as acting in film, or through music, but celebrity speaks of

a perceptual movement outside of the initial cultural form, whether film or popular music (P. D. Marshall, personal interview, 2014). Celebrity implies the dimensions of the performer and how we use them in all sorts of other ways in our popular culture. The celebrity aspect implies that we are concerned with the star's everyday life to the extent that they become a study of the private, the intimate, but in the most public way. This chapter's focus is the complex relationship between star performativity through the filter of popular music, and its emotive/affective reception and response. It will explore notions of embodiment and the circulation of power through the affective contours of our day-to-day lives. The chapter will analyze the digital bodies of the band Little Dragon to make the claim that in contemporary life we are subject to a radical ubiquitization or digital shimmer that deterritorializes the star performer while simultaneously drawing the willing into an intimate "embrace," thus contributing to the proliferating layers of affective experience. As an added dimension to "becoming," the chapter traces out instances of straying from conventional forms of gender embodiment in ways often coded as deviant and pathologized. It will look at star performers in music who purposefully embody forms of deviancy, such as Marilyn Manson, Lady Gaga, and the protest street music of Grime, in articulating some of the contemporary limits of artistic identity politics in performance.

Digitization's Sensually Mathematical Configurations

The way in which the predominant use of digital technologies has seen the delivery and reception of sound much altered has led a number of scholars to discern the characteristic properties of the process and media form. Jonathan Sterne, for example, argues that "the MP3 carries within it practical and philosophical understandings of what it means to communicate, what it means to listen or speak, how the mind's ear works, and what it means to make music. Encoded in every MP3 are whole worlds of possible and impossible sound and whole histories of sonic practices" (2012: 2). In the process of digitization the technologies used for the processing and transmission of information use the same language (binary code) that has enabled the technological convergence of computers, telecommunications, office technologies and assorted audiovisual consumer electronics (Larivière et al. 2013; Barr 2000; Hamelink 1995). Indeed, information handling has been subject to much innovation since the early 1990s, when computing truly entered mainstream society. For instance, word processors have increasingly been replaced through intervening stages by touchscreens; computer-aided design (CAD) supplemented by user-generated content, and electronic mail by voicemail, video calls and a variety of social media. Because digital bits are intangible they may be formed, copied and sent instantaneously via these media, ending a period of scarcity for the creation and distribution of media content once controlled by legacy industry players in traditional industries such as print, radio and television broadcasting and recorded music. Early advocates such as Nicholas Negroponte (1995) argue the key benefit of digitization is the ability to compress data because sound, for example, generates large files of information. In order to save download time various compression techniques have been employed, such as

MPEG (Motion Pictures Experts Group). MPEG has become one of the most popular formats for compressing audio and video files. The variation of MPEG, MPEG-1, Layer 3, or MP3, is commonly used to compress and copy audio files, and the compression ratio for MPEG is enormous. More than this, however, the hegemony of incumbent media organizations, such as record companies, has been disrupted by the internet's capacity to provide a plethora of competing digital distribution channels, such as YouTube, Spotify, the Pirate Bay, Vimeo, and a range of social media, all with global reach. In addition, content is also being created for public consumption by individual "producers," to use Bruns's term (2007; 2008), rather than through professional record companies and other media players, including journalists, movie producers, and authors.

The discourse of digitization here begs the question of how an intangible series of ones and zeros transmitted via a "ubiquitous and banal technology" with reference to the MP3 (Sterne 2012: 2) afford a surfeit of sensually mathematical configurations, and register with listening bodies to affect "the sublime." Certain musical experiences undeniably afford inexpressible feelings for a number of people. The concept of phaino-ken proposed in this chapter (defined in detail below) uses music and the consequent engagement it offers as a means by which to critically examine the social significance of celebrity/star embodiment.

It might be provocative to make the suggestion that an attempt to characterize forms of embodiment simply as conventional or deviant is, in some senses, missing the point. This is because embodiment is arguably a twofold process of performance (making visible) and a reading strategy (seeing and attributing meaning to what is seen). What is interesting about embodiment is the process of negotiating the meaning of the visible signs, especially how musical genres can provide stars, celebrities and fans with a primer for how to perform, read, and see. Marshall argues that a person becomes a star through a distinct textual performance that might be acting in film or singing a song (personal interview, 2014). The endurance in the hearts and minds of the public of a popular figure over time is essential to the essence of stardom, resulting in them appearing as "extra-ordinary" individuals to be emulated (Stevenson 2006: 2). Celebrity for its part, speaks of a perceptual movement outside of the beginning cultural form, whether this be film or popular music. Celebrity implies that it is the dimensions of that person who performed and how we use them in all sorts of other ways in popular culture. The celebrity aspect is that we are interested in the star's everyday personal life to the extent that they become a study of the private in the most public way.

How the term "fan" and the theory of "fandom" are understood has reverberations. The use of the word "fan" here is meant to contribute to the contemporary narratives of fandom by broadly encapsulating and taking seriously all "fans" and "fandoms." The work here is mindful not to elevate one subcultural category (such as opera or rock music) as better than another (for example, pop; indeed opera was the pop music of its day) even though this might be the intent of fans themselves, who often use musical taste/affinity as a marker of social identity. Matthew Hills has grappled with the contested nature of the term fan in his influential work *Fan Cultures* to argue that the fan "cannot be pinned down through singular theoretical approaches

or singular definitions” (2002: xiii). More directly, his focus on fandom finds that it is part of a larger “dialectic of value’ in which personalized, individual and subjective moments of fan attachment interact with communal constructions and justifications without either moment over-writing or surmounting the other” (2002: xiii). Hills’s later work responds to fandom in the digital mediascape, reasoning that “digital fandom collapses semiotic and enunciative productivity into hybridized or generalized textual productivity, whilst also calling for subsets of textual productivity to be theorized, e.g. natively-digital/remediated analogue; mimetic/transformative; informal/formal; explicit/implicit” (2013).

For Hills then, educated, semiotic and textual productivity in the digital era are increasingly fluid terms, rather than fixed, reified categories (2013: 150). The distinction between popular music and rock music, for their parts, has arisen within an industry/artistic paradox whereby artists, hoping to survive by their creative means (rather than working at a “day job”), find it necessary to promote their creative work via commercial means. They thus become part of “the system” they frequently oppose due to its frequent restrictions on artistic freedom, from the limits on experimenting with music and the necessity of producing a “commercial” sound that will generate sales in a mainstream market, to the clothes and public image presented. Indeed, McRobbie (1998; her perspective is from the fashion industry but cited in relation to the music industry by Negus 2002: 508) has argued that “the creative impulse breeds a certain distaste for, denial of and even contempt for the day-to-day realities” of the commercial side of the industry. Against this background then, rock has been defined through the rejection of music that is characterized as soft, trivial, overly commercial and worthless. These features are seen as being characteristic of pop, where rock conversely is concerned with authentic forms of rebellion, freedom, technical musicianship and uniqueness. That much rock music uses almost identical methods of promotion, marketing techniques and commodification to those of popular music is certainly obscured by this sort of reasoning (Stevenson 2006: 29–30). What remains, regardless of the ideological positions presented above, is that “fans” are neither dysfunctional nor indicators of social hysteria, and nor is fandom considered here to be inconsequential.

The Voice’s Breath Signals the Heart’s True Intent: Music, Star Performer, and the Formation of Identity

There is a remarkable moment of dialog in the film *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (directed by Ben Stiller, 2013) when Walter recounts to his friend Cheryl how his idolon vision of her in a Greenland tavern singing the song “Major Tom” (in fact, “Space Oddity,” 1969, by David Bowie) was what awakened an impulse affording him the mental and physical capacity to run and throw himself into a moving helicopter, flown by a drunken man, in order then to jump out again onto a ship in the ocean. Walter says to Cheryl: “I started to imagine ... and it got me to where I wanted to go.” Indicative here is the notion of the *mise en abyme* (André Gide, 1893, cited by

Dällenbach 1989: 8) or what Lucien Dällenbach calls “the mirror in the text” (1989: 17–18) or a representation of a representation (a “reflection of a reflection” to borrow lyrics from Arcade Fire’s “Reflektor,” 2013). Foremost in this context is the use of an element within a work that mirrors the work as a whole. It is in evidence when (the imagined) Cheryl sings the song “Space Oddity” to Walter in her present day, reflecting onto him as she does so the sentiments of Bowie’s lyrics (of courage and going into the unknown) that Bowie was himself reflecting back on (British) society at the end of the 1960s, the cusp of a new era, and its own time of ideological contestation, change and contradiction.

The nexus between the fan and star performer through their music has significance to both. McLeod (2003: 338) argues that music is of fundamental importance because it “creates an embodied but imaginary space that mediates our internal space (feelings, desires, dreams) with external space (the physical, experienced) ... Music takes us outside our bodies and place while simultaneously reminding us of our location and what it means to live there.” Though distanced physically through increasingly unlocatable spaces via technological apparatuses (examples include the iPod, iPhone, phablet (phone + tablet)) or digital means (such as MP3 files or Spotify), the performer and audience are brought closer together through the music (Marshall 2006: 199). A relationship is able to form between the celebrity/star performer and a listening body who might self-identify as “fan” as they closely connect virtually to an experience of a particular medium, a particular materiality, and a particular cultural phenomenon that matters – a phaino-ken. This term phaino (shining) and ken (one’s range of knowledge or perception) is proposed here because the single word “music” is inadequate to convey a deeper hermeneuein, thus losing the possible depth of meaning that might be conveyed. Julia Kristeva’s term “phenotext” is useful, defined as that which denotes “language that serves to communicate, which linguistics describes in terms of ‘competence’ or ‘performance.’” And further: “The phenotext is a structure ... it obeys rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee” (Kristeva 1984: 87). Roland Barthes’s detailed extension regarding the phenotext of music, or the “pheno-song” is also marked, however, by a preoccupation with the accepted rules of singing and breathing (the song’s soul), the codification of certain styles, but does include “everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything which is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural values (the matter of acknowledged tastes, of fashion, of critical commentaries), which takes its bearing directly on the ideological alibis of a period (‘subjectivity,’ ‘expressivity,’ ‘dramaticism,’ ‘personality’ of the artist)” (1977: 182). It is this concept of “pheno-song” that underscores the use of phaino-ken for the purpose of this study with the intention of emphasizing the essence of the star/fan relationship whereby the star “glows” with the “reflected light” of the culture in which it exists, and the process by which a willing listener body “becomes” more than they might have been.

In grappling with the significance of a media text such as music (see Goodwin 1992 on music video), and all the normative arguments and metanarratives that supervene, for the listener/fan (the less inspired term of late capitalism, “consumer,” will not be used here), there is an equally important narrative around the mutual

relationship between music and associated textual objects, and the listener body/fan. The argument here suggests there exists what Redmond calls a “productive intimacy,” meaning that “stars and celebrities feel they are an important and valued part of everyday life, and listening bodies employ stars/celebrities to extend and enrich their everyday world” (2012: 35; see also Rojek 2001). This academic position regarding perceptions of “the intimate” relies on but perhaps moves away from earlier understandings of the process of “authentication” as used by Dyer (1991) and understood to involve an “infinite regress”; a dynamic, ongoing movement from the textual to the physical that is never brought to completion. In consideration of the intimate nature of the relationship, it is in a sense “consummated” where the fan uses the celebrity/star performer to gradually intertwine experiences of them in the fan’s own gradual process of developing self-awareness. Use of the star/celebrity (phainoken) might act as what Felicity Collins calls the “transitional object” that supports the individual in their process of “becoming.” That is, the transitional object (be it the star/celebrity’s music, bodily performance, costume, textual object, other attire of the representative that denotes a “tribe” of interest, or all of these or in combination) helps to avoid or assimilate certain values – even generates hope (Collins 2014). Supporting this claim for a certain becoming by *dramatis personae* are the sober comments of contemporary musician Dario Cinque, reflecting upon his own early engagement with music that led him to latterly study classical music and pursue music professionally (personal interview, 2014). On his early influences, he contends that:

I remember when I was a child, working to save enough money for, or having begged my parents sufficiently to have them buy for me, a new vinyl record. I was so excited to get it home, listen to it over and over sitting in front of a “hi-fi stereo” (with decent quality), therefore giving my upmost attention to the music and maybe holding the album cover in my hands, touching the pictures, reading the lyrics. In this way, not only was it the single that made me want to buy the album, but the whole album itself was appreciated.

Cohen has described the internalized individual identification processes of media use (to use its broadest term) whereby “audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if the events were happening to them” (2001: 245). Philosopher Susanne Langer’s assessment of feeling similarly presents an understanding of affect as a symbolic or speculative event (see Massumi 1996) whereby feeling, “as sensory stimulus or inward tension, pain, emotion or intent, is not separable from mentality” but in fact is “the mark of mentality” (Langer cited in Priest 2013: 46). There is probably much truth in this claim. For example, if one cries (or conversely does not) during a film when someone dies, or when a child is born, or a mother employs a powerful speech to her beloved daughter on her wedding day, we are drawing on our real personal and emotional lived experiences. What this understanding captures is that our emotional reactions when we respond to a story or to a star performer are like emerging phenomena. For ethnographer and fan studies scholar Daniel Cavicchi, fandom is emotionally experienced and “a process of being” whereby the star performer acts not as a particular possession or even an activity

but as “a continuing presence to which they [the fan] may turn again and again” (1998: 59); not in a regressive, going backward sense but instead, moving forward. In an interview he raises the question: “If fandom is about emotional attachment, something that is largely experiential and outside the realm of official institutions and documentation, what evidence would exist from the past to show that it was developing or even existed?” To which he suggests that it is primarily “a matter of taking one’s own experience and weighing it with that of someone else, using the materiality of the space and the human body as a sort of constant” (Cavicchi 2009).

Redmond (2014) has argued that the star performer/fan relationship, albeit unreal, at its best acts to positively assist with one’s identity formation and is completed (or “consummated”) in such a way as to see the individual made whole. The star performer’s bodily worth, however, must be understood not simply as the commodification of their romantic allure or sex appeal, but as role model of sorts. Fast found in her study of the 1970s rock group Led Zeppelin that while the majority of their female fans acknowledged that they were sexually attracted to band members, they emphasized that they listened to the music because it also afforded “a powerful, liberating, intellectual, sexual, and spiritual experience.” Moreover, the music impacted on listeners on an “elemental, primal level regardless of sexual persuasion” (2001: 170–2).

Precisely because the star performer can establish an intimate connection with a willing individual, a fan can be affected positively (and sometimes negatively) as they navigate their way through key life moments. Redmond provides the example of shy, lonely, troubled or culturally disconnected people finding company and companionship in and through celebrity culture and stars whereby celebrities are figures “that the isolated individual can invest in, talk to, fantasize over; in exchanges where they are no longer shy, alienated, and through which they feel wanted and connected” (2014: 114, citing Rubin, Perse and Powell 1985). This is not simply “playful” identity construction and exploration because for a number of fans it is serious and painful emotional growing, or “becoming” to use the earlier term, where, for example, a teen pushes against the ideological, financial, regulatory, gendered, and class confines of their lived worlds. What is learned through the process of “becoming” is important, and it is this higher personal, experiential and significant learning that is deeper than “playful” imaginings (Redmond 2013; 2014; Frith 1996).

This type of identification with a star performer seems then to transgress the orthodox lines of class, gender, sexuality, race, and place, as it did for a young David Jones (Bowie) through his appreciation of and curiosity about the music of the American, black, bisexual musician Little Richard. Arguably, Jones’s own illusions of grandeur and artistic curiosity via musical production and performance laid the foundations for the creation of an active pastiche of these factors that he has gone on to constantly monitor and revise, by adding and subtracting bits of his self-image, leading to an understanding of how he might later present versions of it in his own groundbreaking work through Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane and the Thin White Duke. Like Bowie, Marilyn Manson has similarly constructed (or appropriated) a narrative of the physical body as one of androgyny, but also, for Manson, that of a “cyborg,” characterized by a sense of otherworldliness: “a bricolage of jack

boots, leather, lingerie, black lipstick, eerie contact lenses and cadaverous face paint” (Wright 2000: 374). According to Wright:

Marilyn Manson is a semiotic threat from deep within the dominant culture. He knows full well that he is playing, not only with inter-generational dynamite, but with the legacy of the PMRC [the Parents’ Music Resource Centre], the neoconservative right, the censorship lobby, the hegemony of banal rock radio and, above all, the thoroughly fraudulent claim that rock music causes teen suicide. (2000: 380)

Manson (one-time music journalist) has attempted the deconstruction of contemporary North American culture and developed the rock identity of prophetic persona whose very essence is to be reviled, condemned and ultimately sacrificed by that culture. According to Wright, Manson takes himself and his music very seriously: “his critique of organized religion is both personal and ideological, and his music is not intended to induce self-destructive behaviour but, on the contrary, to inspire strength and independence” (2000: 375). Like Bowie before him, Manson’s conjured and provocative image visually challenges previous generations while frequently inspiring his fan base: “I see what I do as a positive thing. I try to bring people closer to themselves” (Manson in 1996, cited in Wright 2000: 375). This action reflects Bowie’s own metonym of emotion used to mobilize reaction and channel affect into purposeful action via visual and sonic creativity. For a number, these culturally controversial bodies trace Nietzsche’s prototypical philosopher’s aesthetic contemplation through which humankind is assisted in the “vivisections on our own souls” in order that we might “heal ourselves afterwards” (2013: 99). While a young teen might never realize such artistic dreams of their own, the magic of “the star” persona might afford them opportunities for imagining an alternative world, to dream the (im)possible and find the necessary space in which to grapple with their own reality and impeding future.

In circumnavigating the sociopolitical possibilities of gendered and sexualized performance, there might be additional room here for reading the work of Bowie, and latterly Marilyn Manson, and the similarly controversially gendered Lady Gaga, as “camp” in the contemporary context. Medhurst has stressed that, while difficult to define, the term camp has served to “undermine the heterosexual normativity through enacting outrageous inversions of aesthetic and gender codes” (1997 279). Defined by wit, by an awareness of the performativity of the everyday life or “the natural,” and by an estimation of the aesthetically appealing over the morally right, camp offered a mode for rejecting middle-class values. In his reading of Lady Gaga, Alexander Cho (cited in Horn 2010), for example, implies that Lady Gaga does not stop at name-dropping her inspirational sources (Grace Jones, Andy Warhol’s Factory “star” Candy Darling, and David Bowie among them), but instead models her whole star image more and more on these camp icons:

While it may be simple to dismiss her outright as a bit of normative pop fluff, this, I argue, misses the point. In fact, Lady Gaga makes a very explicit attempt to shrewdly, purposefully – even politically – expose the nature of our fascination with pop icons by making it her mission to foreground the artifice of her own performance.

For Lady Gaga, a certain “diathesis” renders her natural body – the vehicle – metaphorically changed as it comments upon and embodies, through costume and creative artifice, the pretensions of the popular music industry. It is a certain way of making sense of “radical neoliberal capital’s propensity to manage and abstract affective labour (labour which seeks an emotional outcome of some kind) to a kind of ubiquitous matter, to a material that exceeds the bounds of the human” (Thompson and Biddle 2014: 15). Using the concept of phaino-ken that holds the star firmly within its axis, it is reasonable to argue here that (1) the star together with (2) their music, performance, costume, and creative “show” (what Barthes termed the “pheno-song”) allow (3) fans opportunities to visually and sonically connect with something beyond themselves to embed new thinking as they reflect upon, interpret and “read” the media form. Frequently the music and lyrics, even costume, are the ways through which both the creator and the listening body might access those things that “bother” them (Bowie 2002). Moreover, along with carefully chosen words and the meaning they might convey, music is also, importantly, the purveyor of the aura and raw emotion of beat and rhythm – and such is the case of Grime.

Grime is a musical genre broader than the individual examples cited above. It incorporates a number of styles, including the anger of punk, the low rumbling of drum and bass, the lyricism and vocal styles of hip-hop, with variations to the rhythms of dancehall. This protest street music emerged as an underground genre from the estates of East London in the early 2000s. Like the David Bowie of the late 1960s singing of postwar England and suburban social discontent, or Bob Dylan during the 1970s singing of his disillusion with the 1960s counterculture movement, the Mods criticizing the uncertain economic time of London, to Manson and Gaga of the (post) postmodern era embodying the pretensions of the popular music industry, Grime for its part has also sonically connected with its audiences through modes and intensities of affect – sounding out the rage, frustration and resentment of the present-day.

Affective emotions are subliminally layered, and a less constructive attachment to star/celebrity culture might see an intense personal attitude develop based on the narcissistic tendencies of self-love. The intense attachment is perceived to be deserved and should be reciprocated (Hotchkiss 2003). Psychologically troubling is the development of the borderline pathological attitude where “the fan” evaluates their existence “only in relation to their favourite celebrity,” whom they assume feels precisely the same way (Redmond 2014: 114).

Star Performers, Listening/Watching Bodies and the Contemporary Music Industry: A Beautiful Catastrophe

Digital technology has the capacity to heighten the cultural importance of both fandom and celebrity. In an observational ethnographic study of the capacity for more complex identification processes to be formed using the internet, Soukup established that fans can influence substantially the meanings of media texts and use the

iconography of celebrities to participate “visibly” in public discourse via such digital means. Specifically, fans have the capacity to enter into a dialog with the “artist” and the fan community; to co-create the representation of the celebrity; and to establish better personal identification with the celebrity. The critical conclusion here whereby identification with celebrity culture and/or star performers is expedited, in increasingly individualistic and digital media-saturated cultures, is found to be fundamental as a means by which everyday people can overcome their seeming “invisibility or anonymity” contrasted against that of the celebrity/star (Soukup 2006: 334).

Nearly 35 years ago, Alvin Toffler (1970) used the term *prosumer* when he predicted that the role of producers and consumers would begin to blur and merge. Don Tapscott (2009) later used the term *prosumption* (production + consumption), while Australian researcher Axel Bruns employed the term *produsers* to describe participants in interactive spaces who engage with content interchangeably in consumptive and productive modes, often at the same time (2007: 6). Recently, Grace (2014) has used the term “user-created content” (see also Cinque 2012: 10). What is undeniable is that the top-down flow of select music from a few record companies to a mass audience has been disrupted by the digital means of content creation, distribution and sharing. Peter Green, public relations manager for several Australasian acts, most notably Skyhooks, Bic Runga, Split Enz and their alumni, including Crowded House and the Finn Brothers, has seen the music industry change since the emergence of networked communications via the internet:

Our main band, Crowded House, had a following on the internet around five years before the mainstream uptake of the internet (in 1985), so we have seen it grow and change from very early on. The internet might be seen as a case of two extremes, good and bad. The good: (almost) instant access to a lot of people, and for the most part you can control what goes out (at the start anyway). Prior to the net you'd rely on press releases going out via telex, then fax, and mail. The media outlet could edit whatever it thought least necessary and run it when they thought it best to do so. The internet is certainly great now for areas like pre-sales where (if you have the database) you could sell out shows much quicker. If you are a very young band without a record deal, your music can still become available to people via the net. The bad: pirating of songs, which has created an “it should be free” generation. Also, smaller dividends back to the artists from areas like iTunes, compared to CDs, LPs, etc. Purchased music has dropped worldwide for about a decade now, so artists' revenue has turned towards being derived from touring live shows. (Green, personal interview, 2014)

Always evocative, however, is the “star” because the star dramatizes the search for identity, temporarily suspending everyday reality and introducing new possibilities into human imagination (Stevenson 2006). In the (post) postmodern visually networked age, listening bodies are bypassing the traditional commercial arrangements to secure “objects of desire” in a digital realm where it is possible to “absorb” the essence of the star, by a kind of “osmosis” or cultural identification. Arguably what is afforded now is a new intimate nexus by means of technology that might be likened to a digital shimmer; a seemingly real image and an always important, but mostly illusory, virtual relationship.



Figure 24.1 Lead singer of Little Dragon, Yukimi, seen sitting in her home/studio (Image from nabumarubberband.com)

This digital shimmer was expressed and experienced in the release by Little Dragon of their song “Klapp Klapp” in 2014 via interactive video. The usual method of communicating the release of a song by musicians and the like is by advertising, radio and press statements to the media; however, in this video, the band’s singer Yukimi Nagano afforded an “interactive” encounter. When a viewer opened the website Yukimi was seen sitting in her home-studio on a music stool, casually dressed in a track suit or pajamas next to a pink phone while reading a book (figure 24.1). After a few seconds the image blurred and a message appeared announcing to the viewer: “Little Dragon has something really important to tell you, but they forgot your phone number. Enter it below with your country code first so they can give you a ring and fill you in” (figure 24.2). When a landline or cellphone number was added, Yukimi went to the phone and soon you received a call. In the voice-activated pre-recorded message, Yukimi said hello and looked directly to camera. She smiled and announced the release of the album and tour dates (for the US and UK only). Once the message was delivered, she said, “Hopefully I will see you soon coz I have to go.” She put down the phone and turned to leave the room; only to turn and pick up the phone to take with her.

A moment later your phone rang again and another band member, Erik (Bodin), appeared on your screen to ask the viewer if he or she would like to watch the new video. While he moved out of shot, the video was seen embedded in the picture of a TV mounted on the wall in the home/studio. As the video came to its end, keyboardist Håkan Wirenstrand came in to water small plants strategically placed in the room. He completed his task and then used the phone to dial your number. The phone rang, he seemed to look directly at you and he told you, “I just wanted to remind you to stay hydrated ...” Finally, Fred (Fredrik Källgren Wallin) entered the

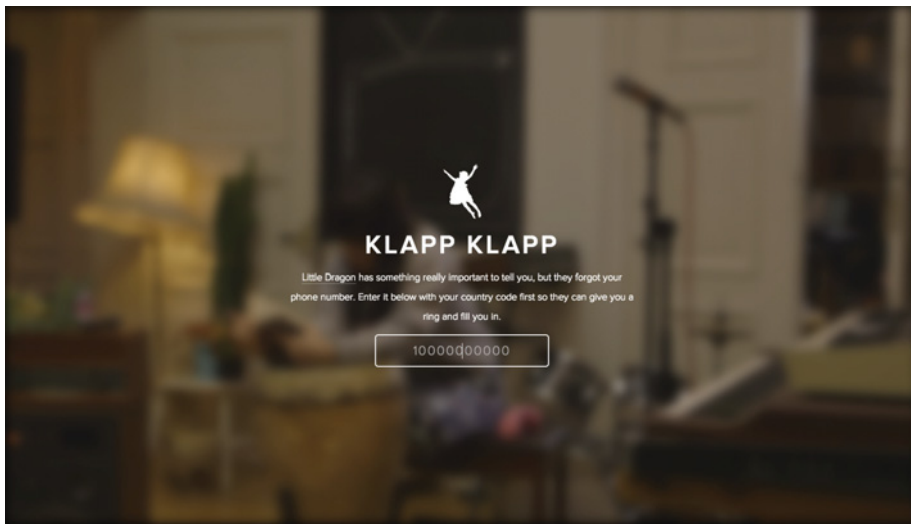


Figure 24.2 Fans are invited to send Little Dragon their landline or cellphone number (Image from nabumarubberband.com)

room and sat down on the music stool. He looked at the camera and dialed the given number to say “hi” and ask if you would like to listen to the new single. “OK” he responded, turned on an old-fashioned radio and the music started as all the band members entered the room to perform with their instruments and “jam” over the playing of their new single. It was intimate, personal, as if the phone-call was real and as if the viewer was really there with the band in the moment. While interesting and entertaining for audiences from around the globe who might all access the website, what was missing in this global media message was the fact that the release was worldwide yet the message was not tailored for fans outside the US or UK. To that end, the message would need to be enabled for the telephone dialing codes of other countries, too.

The digital shimmer is also manifest through the use of Twitter and a seemingly intimate connection can be made when fans contact a star/celebrity directly (or at least follow their conversations in real time), thus being afforded the perception of being a part of the star’s world. Amos Tenerini-Levy, who has had a longstanding international career in the music industry, concurs. In the UK during the 1960s, he was a booking agent for bands such as Genesis, The Who and Fleetwood Mac. He continued his career in the US in various guises, from tour manager for the New York Dolls to owner of a recording studio, to international coordinator for EMI Records in Milan until 1983. “Absolutely yes, I think the social media is good. Definitely, it connects fans more directly to the bands. It is also a positive way of connecting fans with bands and individual musicians. It’s a different way of doing things. It certainly allows a number of new opportunities” (Tenerini-Levy, personal interview, 2014).

The classically trained Italian musician Dario Cinque had his rock band LoMo produced in Italy by Hugo Race (from Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds), and then, using

a variety of social media and music portals, including Facebook, YouTube, Spotify, Vevo, and Deezer, among others, they were afforded a number of opportunities for their name and music to become known around the globe. Dario recounts:

In the past, a band or single artist would record their demo and have it heard only by local listeners – so a very small audience. Today, with the use of the internet, my music is being listened to (and maybe even bought on iTunes and Reverbnation) by people in all corners of the world. Moreover, I can thank fans personally on my Facebook page or via Twitter. (Dario Cinque, personal interview, 2014)

These firsthand accounts from the music industry today throw light on the perception that the internet has altered irrevocably the experience of listening to music. What is irrefutable is that the top-down flow of music (using analog legacy devices such as the vinyl record or cassette tape) through the key steps of careful selection, recording, packaging and distribution, via the closed channels of global record companies, to a mass audience has been disrupted by the digital means of content creation, distribution and sharing. According to Duffett, the internet era finds fans increasingly “communicative, imaginative, communal, expert, interesting and intelligent” (2014: 21). Further, they challenge the idea that electronic mediation is an alienating and impersonal process, because fans are indeed at the forefront of an astute, techno-savvy, creative culture.

Conclusion

Two provocations have been intertwined here, the first being that the star is fundamental to the listening body for the purposes of, in ideal circumstances, positive and purposeful identity formation – for becoming. For a number, this is like a chapter of enchanted accidents. The second summons the first, to pull it into the digital realm whereby the changed nature of the contemporary music industry bears witness to a digital shimmer that draws the relationship between star and listening body ever closer, perceptibly reducing their nonphysical distance from each other.

Through an analysis of the digital bodies of Little Dragon, coupled with key personal interviews, I have argued that the digital mediascape presents increased opportunities for stars to be ever present, for authentic connections to develop and an intimate nexus between fan and star to emerge. This nexus is indebted to the star’s messages appearing to be unmediated by managers, personal assistants or other profile-raising agents, allowing the fan to find nuanced details that ultimately color their insight into the star’s day-to-day private and/or professional life, occurring in real time. For a number, there is much delight in such direct action. The radix from which the digital shimmer emerges is a certain *phaino-ken*, or one’s knowledge or experience of a particular medium, its distinct materiality, and the particular cultural phenomenon of consequence – such is the essence of the star/fan relationship – and the means by which the star “glows” with the “reflected light” of the culture in which it exists. It is simultaneously the process whereupon the fan, caught in moments

of wishing and desirous optative moods (I hope...; I want ...; If only ...) actually “becomes” more than they might have otherwise been. To put a finer point on it, within this digital nexus the star performer is deterritorialized while he or she simultaneously draws fans in, contributing in the process to the multiplying and reproducing seams of affective experience. This radical ubiquitization of digital texts (musical forms and virtual conversations), together with the star body, interrupt the present and fertilize the contemporary experience of popular music stars and celebrity.

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Part Eight

Celebrity Identification

Introduction

P. David Marshall

What does it mean to identify with a celebrity? How can we conceptualize the connection that is made between the individual or audience and the celebrated being? Conceptually and theoretically, the concept of identification has been one of the enduring foci of inquiry in media, communication and film studies that links it to traditions in psychology, sociology, and philosophy. On the most basic level, celebrity identification is purely a form of social recognition; but it is the nature of that recognition that intrigues scholars. How we look at celebrity figures, and whether our “gaze” – to use a term championed in psychoanalysis-inspired film studies and Mulvey’s feminist rereading (1989) – is similar to the way in which we look and engage with other people we know and recognize or whether we situate the celebrity differently, is just the beginning of an enduring inquiry into the uses made and “effects” of mediatized identities.

Identification has been associated with equal vigor with cognitive development studies (see Cohen 2001: 245–7). On a basic level, identification is a form of establishing identity. Like father and mother figures, celebrities operate in a way as larger-than-life entities in their capacity to perhaps be more complete versions of ourselves: at least in their fictive constructions, film and television celebrities cohere in some way even in the most complicated of roles. But the structure of contemporary culture positions celebrities in what can be described as a form of structural inequality. Celebrities are positioned as more powerful, more influential, and more visible by their definition as celebrated and public individuals. Identification with and through celebrities can thus be a form of partial recognition of the self through the celebrated, a reconstruction of a form of bonding and connection, a negotiated rejection of the celebrity’s identity by the individual, and/or deployment of the celebrated in a construction of a gendered identity. Because celebrities circulate through and inhabit a public culture, their embodied self implies a legitimated social dimension of value and significance embedded in their persona that once again endows them with a

larger-than-life entity. They are not purely individuals, and nor are they social constructs of identity, but they inhabit a middle ground, a site of negotiated identity that is not totally typical, archetypal or totally individuated.

There have been some areas of study that have advanced on this identity-identification dyad more robustly than others. Over the last quarter of a century, fan studies has emerged as one of the more fruitful directions because it looks with a certain intensity at the fan relationship to popular cultural forms and artifacts. A subset of fan studies is an investigation of the relationship to the public and fictive personalities produced by the entertainment industries, in particular.

The concept of para-social interaction is often central to fan/celebrity studies and this is analytically deciphered by Matt Hills in the first of our chapters in this section. In some areas of media psychology that have studied fan interaction, para-sociality is seen as a substitute for real social interactions: thus the fan relationship to the celebrity is seen as a form of psychological displacement. Fans in this thinking are categorized as introverted personalities who form bonds with their idols as a way to compensate for inadequate social formations in their everyday lives. The fantasy of celebrity connection and identification provides a pathway out of the prison of the everyday and bestows on the fan a kind of devotional – even religious follower – identity that has both directed purpose and coherence (Evans and Wilson 2000: 99–113).

To get closer to the dimensions of these connections between fan and celebrity, there has been some success with ethnographic audience research. Ferris and Harris (2011) have investigated star–audience interactions and sitings to determine the relative efforts at control that fans have in these interactions. The studies of fan cultures are legion and generally point to the duality that Hills identifies in his chapter: that fan identification with celebrities is as much a social interaction with other fans as some form of interaction with the celebrity. Indeed, the now classic audience studies by Joke Hermes have similarly revealed through her research on women reading gossip magazines (1995) how women use celebrities for their normative identity formation: what is interesting about her research is that it identifies the non-fan discourse around celebrity, and this approach is advanced further in the chapter she and Jaap Kooijman have developed for this part.

Much of recent research on celebrity identification has shifted to an investigation of the expanded dimensions of celebrity offered by online culture. For some, such as Teri Senft's work on camgirls – an ethnography once again – it has been important to coin a new term to identify this expanded celebrity-like subjectivity. To capture the activity of producing a public version of one's self, Senft (2008) explained this as "micro-celebrity." This approach echoes my own work on identifying the proliferating will-to-fame that online culture has proffered. In other words, celebrity figures both historically and in the contemporary sense serve as identification tropes and pedagogical formations for constructing public personalities more widely and by virtually all users of social media (Marshall 2010; 2014). Marwick, in her chapter in Part Five of this volume also further delineates the value of understanding micro-celebrity in order to describe the contemporary moment and the widespread active laboring on public identity that is being pursued through online platforms.

In a related sense, in her important book entitled *Status Update* (2013), Marwick advances the concepts of “life-streaming” and the “edited self” to describe the online micro-celebrities emerging in Silicon Valley’s tech culture, which are adaptable to other micro-celebrity settings.

The three chapter contributions to this Part Eight on celebrity identification effectively map much of this extensive terrain and are intended to serve admirably as a concluding coda to this book. Identification, in all its variations, from the affective to the embodied, from forms of emulation to the expansion of public personas, is one of the most fertile terrains for the study of celebrity.

Matt Hills’s “From para-social to multisocial interaction: theorizing material/digital fandom and celebrity” is destined to become the definitive conceptualization of how celebrity and fandom work. In a highly sophisticated way, Hills breaks down the distinction between the para-social and the social: fundamentally the formations of projection, imagination and fantasy that are often characterized as exemplary of fan-celebrity para-sociality are also in play in many other forms of social interaction. What is more important, from Hills’s perspective, is to understand that the forms of interaction in fandom operate on two axes of sociality. There is the fan-celebrity dyad and there is the fan-fan dyad. His previous research on the fan-fan dyad identified the useful concept of the subcultural celebrity who operates within a fan community and negotiates a privileged identity for a number of reasons within that space. His research advances further by effectively integrating the recent work on digital fandom and the constitution of celebrity online identity as a way to move beyond the rather simplistic idea that online social media have provided a more intense or deeper para-social connection between fan and celebrity (a new stardom, as he puts it). More accurately, Hills explains, social media and digital culture fandom construct varied patterns of public/celebrity identity and connection that move through a spectrum of public and private to produce not a singular form but incredible variations in the production of authenticity and connection.

Joke Hermes and Jaap Kooijman have produced perhaps the most innovative chapter which is entitled simply “The everyday use of celebrities.” It is an example of how we can retool existing research to explore slightly different questions. Through their audience studies and media-textual studies that were focused on other issues and concerns in the Netherlands, the authors were able to generate a study of celebrity in the ordinary and everyday. In the original research that acts as the resources for this chapter, the idea of celebrity was not necessarily central – the participants were not characterized as fans and the analysis of the transformation of media texts was perhaps more related to commercial/political imperatives than any study of the transformation of public personalities. Nonetheless, this “sideways” study of celebrity generated interesting findings around how celebrity in the everyday played not so much as “models to be emulated,” but rather as “shared points of reference” or social objects. The key dividing line for the study of how celebrities changed was the transformation of Netherlands broadcasting from public to an expanded commercial system. So, along with identifying the play of ethnicity in celebrity as a point of reference, the research also identified the movement to what they describe as a shifted precelebrity television personality system that was less attached to the

publicness embodied by the royal family and the embodied national personalities of the 1970s and 1980s, to a celebration of a more commercial and transnational construction of clearly celebritized public identity.

The final chapter of the volume is entitled "Exposure: the public self explored" and is my contribution to the book. It is a detailed exploration of the expansion, proliferation and naturalization of a public self in our culture. The various definitions of the word "exposure" are investigated in both historical and contemporary terms to identify this new generalizable public identity that is comfortable with exposing the self. Celebrities are one of the key pedagogical tools for this expansion of public exposure to the wider populace as their practices through various media forms pre-date its current ubiquity and have served as the privileged discourse of public identity and identification. The production, exhibition, dissemination, personalization and, ultimately, proliferation of the image and photograph of the public self are examined both in terms of their celebrity origins and in their movement in use and expression by the wider populace in the current era of social media, selfies and semipublic image collections of the self now circulating through online culture. Through definitional tropes related to exposure, the chapter details the technological, glamorized, self-branding, risk-managing, and self-monitoring/specular dimensions that are becoming part of our identities as we blend ourselves into the exigencies of an exposed, mediatized and public self.

The study of identification is one of the central pillars of understanding celebrity in contemporary culture. Although we have provided a part devoted to its closer investigation, it is a truism that nearly all of the chapters of this entire volume are dealing with some dimension of celebrity identity and identification. It defines the link and the connection between the audience and the mediated image of the celebrity and it is the pathway for making sense of the affective associative/negotiated identification we all feel when we make sense of any celebrity. Our three contributions in this part are able to work through that form of identification from Matt Hills's fannish multi-social construction of meaning to Joke Hermes and Jaap Kooijman's sideways use of celebrity as a social reference point and even further to my reading of the naturalization of the new pervasive public self through a generalized celebrity identity and subjectivity.

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From Para-social to Multisocial Interaction

Theorizing Material/Digital Fandom and Celebrity

Matt Hills

How fans have related to their favored celebrities has formed a significant topic in fan studies. In particular, pathologizations of fans have been challenged, with images of the “hysterical” fan being contested by academics intent on respecting fandom (Jensen 1992; Jenkins 2013). One overarching scholarly narrative has therefore seen fan–celebrity interactions revalued, moving from a position where such practices are assumed to constitute a problem or a psychological lack, to an argument that they are part of normative media culture. Discussion surrounding the term “para-social” interaction (Horton and Wohl 1956) captures these shifts, and as Graeme Turner points out: “the use of the term para-social ... has been stripped of some of its pejorative overtones when applied to fandom or the consumption of celebrity. [Anthony] Elliott, for instance, is perhaps one of the most positive in describing fandom as a ‘process of ... enriching the self’ (1999: 139)” (Turner 2004: 93).

Turner later qualifies this account, observing that theorists of celebrity such as Chris Rojek (2012: 125) have returned to the criticism of para-social interactions, adopting a position akin to the pathologization of fans contested by Joli Jensen (1992). As Turner notes, Rojek’s “approach does run slightly against the grain of what has become more commonly a less pejorative account of fandom” (Turner 2014: 103), and this continues to be a matter of debate. In the first part of this chapter I therefore focus on how fan–celebrity para-social interactions have been theorized. I will argue that the concept of the “para-social” – a type of *imagined* rather than co-present social relationship – has not only been spuriously contrasted to “actual” sociability, but that attempts to view para-social interactions between fans and celebrities as “truly” social (Ferris and Harris 2011) fail to adequately consider how the social itself involves imaginary and fantasized aspects. I will argue that both attacks on, and defenses of, fan–celebrity “para-social” interactions have tended to reductively characterize “social” relationships. From there, I will move on to consider how digital fandom has reconfigured debates around the “para-social”: if

this has been positioned as “mediated quasi-interaction” (Thompson 1995: 98) then how does something like Twitter intervene in such analyses? Can we conclude that the alleged deficits of material fandom, where fan–celeb encounters are likely to be highly managed and “pre-staged” (Ferris and Harris 2011: 18), can be made good by exchanges between fans and celebrities online? Retreating from technological determinism (Baym 2010: 38–9), it remains important to contextualize the “para-social” within contemporary media culture (Marshall 2010). Considering the distinctive interactions of digital fandom, in the second section of the chapter I argue that the concept of para-social interaction is problematized not only by the social/para-social binary, but also by its focus on an assumed social dyad (the lone fan and the individual celebrity). If sociability presumes fantasy, then it can never involve a straightforward dyad, since subjects within this pairing will imaginatively draw others into their interactions. Indeed, digital fandom (Booth 2010) makes this spectacularly visible, as fans frequently socialize with fellow fans on the basis of “para-social” interactions. The shared fan-cultural performance and validation of para-sociality, whether via Twitter, Tumblr, or Facebook groups, suggests a need to theorize this as thoroughly “multisocial” rather than as a dyadic relation. First, though, how has “para-social” interaction been approached in work on fandom and celebrity?

Para-social: Fan–Celebrity Identification and the Cultural Production of Self

Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl address how:

radio, television, and the movies ... give the illusion of [a] face-to-face relationship with the performer ... The most remote and illustrious men are met *as if they were* in the circle of one's peers; the same is true of a character in a story who comes to life in these media in an especially vivid and arresting way. We propose to call this seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer a *para-social relationship*. (1956: 215)

For Horton and Wohl it was very much the case that not all para-social relations were pathological (though a subset could be thought of in this way). Indeed, “the formation of compensatory attachments by the socially isolated, the socially inept, the aged and invalid, the timid and rejected” was said to be “reasonable or natural ... It is only when the para-social relationship becomes a substitute for autonomous social participation, when it proceeds in absolute defiance of objective reality, that it can be regarded as pathological” (1956: 223).

Horton and Wohl argued that audience–performer para-social relations were distinguished by the audiences’ lack of obligation, by “a framework within which much may be added by fantasy,” and by being “one-sided, nondialectical ... and not susceptible of mutual development” (1956: 215). It is easy to see how such an account could slide into a negative stereotyping of fans, since even this positive account emphasizes the “compensatory” role of para-social relations, whereby the “socially inept” make

use of this kind of mediated interaction marked by fantasy. Where para-social relations are separated out from the “pathological,” they are still depicted as a kind of substitute for “real” social interactions, that is, those attained by the non-inept, and characterized by mutuality and development. By contrast, a para-social relation, even if based on “the accumulation of shared past experiences [whereby] ... the ‘fan’ ... comes to believe that he ‘knows’ the persona more intimately and profoundly” (1956: 216), can only be an illusion “because the relationship between the persona and any member of his audience is inevitably one-sided, and reciprocity between the two can only be suggested” (1956: 217).

Joli Jensen effectively summarizes how the “para-social” leads to fan-celebrity relationships being conceptualized as “a form of psychological compensation.” In this problematic rendering, fans of celebrities are people who allegedly “inadequately imitate ... normal relationships ... the fan, unable to consummate his desired social relations ‘normally,’ seeks celebrity contact in the hope of gaining the prestige and influence he or she psychologically needs, but cannot [otherwise] achieve” (1992: 16).

A number of writers aligned with fan/celebrity studies have sought to revalue para-social relations (Jensen 2014), opposing accounts of them as nonnormative “second-order intimacy” (Rojek 2001: 52) or as a problematic “illusion of intimacy” (Schickel 1985: 4). This revalorization has proceeded via a series of strategies: firstly, by pointing out that fan-celebrity relations are closer to “social” rather than “para-social” interactions, permitting forms of co-presence and reciprocity after all; and secondly, by emphasizing how fan-celebrity relations can be aligned with enduring social relationships, even being nonpathologically akin to the love felt for embodied significant others. Refuting the “second-order” nature of para-social fan-celeb interactions has meant focusing on “how self-formation is constituted by identification with others – in the case of celebrities, physically absent but no less real” (van Krieken 2012: 95).

Partially deconstructing the para-social/social binary, in *Stargazing* Kerry Ferris and Scott Harris focus on the emergence of social interactions between fans and celebrities. These can occur in a range of contexts, typically being “pre-staged” at official events: “Versions of these pre-staged encounters occur at a variety of different officially organized fan-oriented events. Conventions, in-store promotions, charity events ... – each are subject to the oversight of organizers and to the limitations imposed on fan-celebrity contact ... These tactics create a ‘scripted’ encounter that puts control in the hands of ... celebrities” (2011: 20). Prestaged encounters involve temporary “physical proximity combined with a bit of interactional mutuality, as well as the material artifacts or ‘trophies’ that fans can take away,” such as photos and autographs (2011: 19). They are also usually “temporally rushed and spatially constrained” (2011:20); at a paid-for convention photo opportunity the queue of fans must be kept moving, meaning that there may only be time for the briefest of phatic communications. Such events form part of an “industry geared to selling proximity to celebrities” (Cashmore 2004: 197), although Ferris and Harris argue that fans attempt to circumvent the commodified control of convention organizers in minor ways, such as getting “table photos” with celebrities who are signing autographs at

desks, when not officially allowed to do so (2011: 20). These fan–celebrity encounters do not represent “non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance,” as John B. Thompson characterizes the “mediated quasi-interaction” displayed by fans (1995: 98). Unlike typical para-social interaction, there is an element of reciprocity here, as well as physical co-presence, even if these are both highly stage-managed. Such a mode of interaction resembles “distance through closeness” (Hills and Williams 2005: 348), indicating that although the fan and celebrity can meet and converse, fans are required to respect the celebrity’s privacy and stick to “finite tramlines of communication,” such as indicating the celebrity’s importance to them personally or mentioning favored performances (Rojek 2012: 140).

However, Ferris and Harris see this as just one kind of fan–celeb social interaction, contrasting it to “unstaged” encounters where fans accidentally spot a celebrity going about their everyday business: “The unstaged encounter can be ... more authentic ... than the pre-staged encounter, because it is ... not engineered” (2011: 21). Unstaged encounters might also occur when a fan happens upon location filming, although this can cross over into being a “fan-staged encounter” if fans have deliberately used “access information, effectively hunting down and even interacting with a celebrity ... In ... fan-staged encounters, fans avoid both the regulations of pre-staged encounters and the unpredictability of unstaged encounters. ... [Here], the fan is in control” (2011: 22–3).

These types of fan–celebrity interaction corroborate David Giles’s argument that the term para-social is not quite accurate in relation to celebrities, since we are “entering into a relationship with a living being with whom a bilateral relationship is a possibility” (2000: 128). Giles sees fandom as defined by an interest in (nonpathologically) going beyond para-social interaction: “where parasocial relationships with celebrities are sufficiently powerful to warrant the term ‘fandom,’ the chance of the fan meeting the star is quite high” (2000: 145). However, Ferris and Harris’s taxonomy seems to grant rather too much power to fans via their category of “fan-staged” social interactions. Such interactions remain constrained by the ritualized hierarchy of “media people” versus “ordinary people” (Couldry 2012: 81). It is typically again a “bit of interactional mutuality” that is secured here rather than an ongoing, accessible relationship, along with a “trophy” of material fandom – a photo or autograph. These embodied “object practices” of media fandom (Rehak 2013: 29) are not reducible to mediated quasi-interaction, instead hinging on the collision of fan’s and celebrity’s time-space paths. As Cornel Sandvoss has noted: “material objects of fandom ... create a common realm between the fan and the star, while the star remains the primary object of fandom. Hence physical objects of fandom such as ... autographs or photos ... function as intermediate spaces between the self and the actual ... object of fandom which itself is absent” (2005: 90). The emotional significance of these artifacts surely outruns any sense of how “contact with ... the persona transfers some of his prestige ... to the active fan” (Horton and Wohl, cited in Jensen 1992: 16). It is not so much “prestige” that’s transferred to the fan, but rather that a felt connection between the fan and celebrity is given tangible materiality.

This process of self-objectified identification can also be present through other practices of material fandom, such as what Jackie Stacey has called “*identificatory*

practices ... [of] extra-cinematic identification" (1994: 171). Stacey separates out "fantasies about the relationship between the identity of the star and the identity of the spectator," which are said to be cinematic, occurring while a film text is consumed, and extracinematic "forms of recognition that involve practice as well as fantasy, in that spectators actually transform some aspect of their identity as a result of their relationship to their favourite star" (1994: 137). This latter form of identificatory practice does not wholly take place in the film spectator's imagination, being perceivable to others, for example through hairstyles or fashions copied from a celebrity. However, Stacey concedes that this fantasies/practices dichotomy is problematic, since fantasies can involve social practices, and social practices can involve fantasies. Stacey's ethnographic audience study of female spectators and their remembered relationships to 1940s and 1950s stars demonstrates how difficult it might be to separate out identification and desire, as well as social interactions and fantasies.

Fan-celebrity para-social relations increasingly come to resemble social practices, as celebrities become a resource through which fans can construct and deepen their self-identity (Hills 2002: 166). Sean Redmond argues that "this ... para-social connectivity is as 'real' as anything can be in a cultural universe made out of simulacra" (2006: 38). Redmond develops this point in *Celebrity and the Media*, suggesting that the "fan and celebrity face one another as carnal beings in a dynamic, relational structure ... stars and fans communicate with one another in and through the activation of powerful emotions and senses" (2014: 13–14). Making para-social "connectivity" a matter of material fandom, Redmond's emphasis on the senses cuts through notions of para-social absence since celebrities remain aware of their fandoms (sensorially relating to traces/performances of fandom), while fans likewise experience celebrities as existentially present even if mediated.

A second line of para-social reevaluation concerns how fan-celebrity imagined relationships can be akin to actual long-term relationships. Annette Kuhn has empirically explored "enduring fandom," focusing on one particular interviewee and moviegoer, Dorris Braithwaite, who has been a fan of Nelson Eddy most of her life. Despite Eddy's death in 1967, Kuhn points out that "he remains very much alive for Dorris ... This must be ... because the element of fantasy in star worship does not necessarily require the sustenance of a living person's presence. The films, the photographs, the recordings remain as memorials" (2002: 208). Kuhn also considers how Dorris writes about her husband, who has passed away more recently:

the enduring fan's devotion survives the death of its object. In an essay written for the newsletter of the Nelson Eddy Appreciation Society, Mrs Braithwaite conveys something of this transcendence: "Now Nelson is gone and so is my husband. But I play records and videos and they are both with me again and I feel just as young and in love as I did all those years ago." (2002: 211)

Memories of viewings "become informed by ... changes in the fans' own lives: Mrs Braithwaite, for instance, hints ... at a renewed mode of reception, new readings of Eddy texts, which became available to her after her husband's death" (Kuhn 2002: 212), with the two forms of loss becoming entwined. But what is striking is the way in which Dorris's Eddy fandom existed for many years alongside her marriage: both

her husband and her celebrity fan object are kept alive in her memories and media. In short, if “the element of fantasy in star worship” does not require a living person’s presence, then the same is seemingly true of a life partner and love – Nelson Eddy *and* Dorris’s husband remain with her as vital parts of her self-identity and its ongoing continuity in the face of loss. Dorris’s experiences resonate with John L. Caughey’s work on “imaginary relationships” (1984: 23). Caughey argues that the “basis of most fan relationships is ... a social relationship. Fans have attachments to un-met media figures that are ... in many ways directly parallel to actual social relationships with real ‘fathers,’ ‘sisters,’ ‘friends,’ and ‘lovers’” (1984: 40).

Caughey rejects any notion of such interactions being “compensatory”: “such an interpretation [the ‘substitute lover’] does not fully suffice. It does not explain the suburban grandmother who had a lifelong ‘affair’ with Frank Sinatra despite forty years of marriage” (1984: 49). What is useful about the work of Caughey and Kuhn is that they offer ways of revaluing para-social interactions as enduring rather than fleeting, that is, important to cultural productions of self. A similar perspective arises in Nick Stevenson’s work on lifelong male fans of David Bowie. On the basis of interviews, Stevenson concludes: “there is a discernible search for a figure of deeper meaning beyond the superficial cycles of commercial culture. ... [I]f modern life and commercial culture is increasingly signified by change, then identifying with a figure that has seemingly survived the accelerated fluctuations of musical fashion offers something more permanent” (2006: 165).

Existing alongside personal trials and tribulations, “Bowie has given shape to these fans’ lives ... [and] encoded the possibility of reinventing oneself and handling change” (Stevenson 2006: 160). Identifying with Bowie’s capacity to encode self-continuity across shifting contexts, fans produce their own self-continuities, using Bowie’s image and music as emotional resources. Rather than interpreting this as a dangerous loss of self in a realm of fantasy, Stevenson ponders instead whether “such relationships may help fans ... construct their own biographies ... In an increasingly individualized society, the culture of celebrity can offer people reflexive resources as they attempt to sustain a coherent identity” (2006: 157). Like Kuhn’s “enduring” movie star fans, Stevenson’s Bowie fans maintain para-social identifications over time. These act as a resource that produces fans’ biographical narratives of self-continuity.

Studying “imaginary relationships”, John Caughey ponders how best to access these, concluding that interviews and “introspective self-reports” are essential (1984: 25). An autoethnographic approach has been adopted by the likes of Sean Redmond (2014) and Markus Wohlfeil (2011), seeking to comprehend material fandom’s lived experiences. Redmond recounts his response to a Sam Taylor-Wood photograph featuring Daniel Craig:

What is in this photograph that wounds me so ...? ... Then it hits me, it is the thick gold band on his curled finger – missing from my own finger, left in a bathroom dish somewhere, confirming the end of a relationship ... Craig’s emoting body provides a ... symbiosis that takes me over. I/we exist in a dynamic relational structure ... that is me crying in the picture, a becoming Craig, me crying before the picture, a Craig

becoming me, an affecting outcome that can only be put into words now. I am a fan of Craig ... and this acts as an opening which allows me to lose and find myself. (2014: 15)

Redmond highlights how momentary para-social identifications can blur self and other in a way that goes beyond words and is difficult to articulate. The felt “symbiosis” with Daniel Craig calls up Redmond’s own biography and a significant previous relationship. It is “para-social” in a sense that goes beyond Horton and Wohl’s definition, being experienced as a wounding remembrance of a powerful affective relationship from the past. This moment of self-reverie reads very much like a psychical process of introjection and projection that can occur in remarkably similar ways regardless of whether it involves a celebrity image or a memory of a loved one. In Redmond’s testimony the self moves emotionally between remembered “real” interactions and “mediated” interactions without marking any distinction between the two. And hence the “para” of para-social interaction seems to break down: there is no experiential difference between the social and the para-social.

The same is true in Wohlfeil’s (2011) account of an ongoing para-social relationship, based on 150,000 words of diary-keeping (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2012: 512–3). Like Redmond, Wohlfeil considers the fan–celebrity relation from the “inside” rather than “from an outsider-looking-in perspective, whereby scholars impose their own preconceived abstract ideas” (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2012: 512), recounting how he has related to the US actress and musician Jena Malone, and discussing how he began dreaming about her while romantically unfulfilled in his personal life. He then “started to imagine what it would be like meeting and talking to Jena ... going out with her or even dating and kissing her – like I would do when I secretly fancy a girl but am too shy or scared of rejection to talk to her” (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2012: 515). Note, again, the continuity between para-social and social relations: Wohlfeil’s fantasies are felt to be no different from how he would think about an actual person he was attracted to, imagining being with them before making an approach.

Just as Anthony Elliott describes fan–celeb para-sociality as a matter of psychical introjection and projection, eventually being tested by disillusioning knowledge of the celebrity (1999: 139), so too does Rosalind Minsky theorize the “real” process of “falling in love” in precisely the same way (1998: 191). Likewise, Wohlfeil and Whelan adopt a psychoanalytic approach to para-sociality: “The consumer internalizes the celebrity’s off-screen persona ... psychically within oneself through a selective reading of media texts and loads it with one’s own ... fantasies ... and meanings. Then s/he projects the created personal impression back onto the celebrity, just to internalize it once again with freshly obtained images ... from the media.” As Wohlfeil and Whelan conclude, “this continuous process of introjection and projection ... allows for the feelings of actually ‘knowing’ the film actress like a close friend” (2012: 517). Wohlfeil observes that “Just like any other social or romantic relationship in real life,” this is a dynamic process changing over time as the celebrity’s career develops and the fan’s social context alters. Wohlfeil calls this a kind of “*living with*” that allows the fan to experience – via selective interpretation of self-mirroring paratexts (Gray 2010; Sandvoss 2005) – “feelings of *love*” (Wohlfeil 2011: 213).

Wohlfeil's self-descriptions appear to fit into the typically dyadic way in which para-social relations are thought of as consisting of an imagined interaction between one fan and one media celebrity. However, Wohlfeil's experience of continuity between the social and para-social – where imagined dating scenarios accompanied feelings of attraction in “real life” too – strongly indicates that separations of para-social/social fail to consider how social relationships are themselves marked by fantasy. In fact, Horton and Wohl's terminology relies on a version of the “social relationship” that is aligned with reality rather than fantasy, and which assumes a neatly dyadic structure between two participants. By contrast, rival philosophies as distinct as Deleuzean thought, discourse psychology and psychoanalysis all broadly agree on an ontology where self-identity is divided as a result of “the multiplicities that constitute us” (Littler 2003: 17), or the way that we are a “dialogic species” (Billig 1999: 49), or the manner in which any “individual ... is an inner group of objects and subjects continually defining and creating itself” (Gomez 1997: 213). Within such frameworks, the notion that para-social (or social) relations can be coherently dyadic is a misnomer. Rather than arguing that para-social interactions are really social relationships (being interactive and co-present at times; enduring or being felt as continuous with “real” relationships), we can also approach this deconstruction from the other side: social relations are, perhaps, more like “para-social interactions” than Horton and Wohl (and pathologizing/revalorizing critics) would suppose (see Durham Peters in Wood 2009: 204). So-called “social” relations can be marked by imaginary aspects and by the fact that processes of transference are likely to be involved in significant relationships, as one person relates to another by projecting past relationships on to them, meaning that other figures are involved: “Transference, of course, involves projection, and it is the fundamental way in which all human relationships ... are formed” (Craib 2001: 196). To condemn para-social interactions as an “illusion of intimacy” or a “second-order intimacy” is to misrecognize how illusion and intimacy are bound up with one another, and how *all* intimacy is “second-order” when viewed through the psychoanalytic lens of projection.

Chris Rojek, a major contemporary critic of para-social fan–celebrity encounters, reinstates a binary of valued social and devalued para-social relations. He does this by arguing that “social connections and conversations ... consist of three elements: access, utility and labour” (2012: 135). Access refers to the ease of contact, and its multiplicity in different public/private settings; utility refers to the uses of a relationship, which can be life-enhancing, pragmatic and a matter of emotional need; and labor refers to the self-reflexive monitoring of relationships and the work that is required, and recognized as required, to keep them functioning (2012: 135–6). Having defined these structural attributes of social relationships, Rojek then muses: “there is something peculiar about access, utility and labour in para-social encounters. Unlike ordinary conversations, the recorded nature of celebrity makes access ubiquitous, utility infinite and labour inexhaustible” (2012: 137). This seems to restore a maximal difference between social/para-social encounters. But it relies on a sleight of hand, since in the case of para-social encounters his arguments only make sense in relation to multiple fans, whereas in defining social relationships he adopts an individual stance: it is one individual who gains “access” by living with

another (2012: 135). For Rojek's comparison to make sense he needs to compare like with like, and not individual experiences of "social" access, utility and labor with those of amassed "para-social" fans. Where labor is concerned, the idea that this is "inexhaustible" only makes any sense if a multitude of fans is being described: at an individual level, para-social "labor" remains comparable to that of a social relationship: each fan monitors how their para-social interaction works for them. Fandom, after all, reflexively develops "the project of the self" (Thompson 1995: 223). Rojek's efforts to shore up the para-social/social binary hinge on a switch in logic (from individual to mass).

And yet by adopting a collective approach to para-sociality, Rojek touches on a further way in which the assumed dyad of para-social interactions needs to be complicated. Not only is this dyad problematic in terms of divided subjectivity (Deleuzian; discourse psychology; psychoanalysis), it is also problematic given that para-social relations are frequently shared with friends, family or fellow fans: "It is important ... to stress the group nature of much para-social interaction, and the ways in which it functions as social cement and a basis for community formation" (van Krieken 2012: 83). In *Celebrity Society*, Robert van Krieken notes that in place of devaluing fan-celeb interactions as "second-order," it is more useful to approach "the relationship with the celebrity as often ... constituting a *secondary* aim, the primary one being one's relationship with one's surrounding social network" (2012: 87). Even where the fan-celeb relationship supposedly takes on a primary coloration (in fandom), relations with other fans can remain significant. In any case, a para-social relationship assumed to involve one fan and one celebrity occurs not just dyadically but via a range of social interactions.

Yet van Krieken's ordering of fan-celebrity interactions – that they are either "primary," where the celebrity is a focus for fan attention, or "secondary," where the celebrity provides material for community-building, acting as a kind of social glue – misses the fact that many para-social relations operate exactly in the space between these two models. That is, a concentrated emotional focus on a particular celebrity can nonetheless provide a kind of fan-cultural "glue," binding fan communities together, as para-social interactions become a kind of currency for group affiliations and exchanges as well as underpinning individuals' self-identities. In what follows, I will term this blending of "para-social" identifications and their related communities *multisocial interaction* since there is no one clear "object"-relation here: fans can simultaneously draw on celebrities as a resource within their self-narratives *and* share and perform these narratives with multiple fan others (both known and imagined). Pete Ward suggests that para-social relationships might provoke theories of "celebrity worship" as a kind of "para-religion" (2011: 33), but this comparison, much like van Krieken's primary/secondary separation, prematurely separates out the interrelated, multiple social experiences of fan community and celebrity identification.

Thus far I have considered how fan-celebrity para-sociality – viewed as a "second-order intimacy" by critics, or as a kind of "compensatory" mechanism for fans' alleged social/psychological inadequacy – has been revalued. It has been aligned with the interaction and co-presence assumed to characterize social relationships, and it has been linked to autoethnographic approaches stressing experiential

continuities between para-social and social relations, as well as “enduring fandom” through which biographical self-narratives are produced. Rather than likening para-social to social relations, I have argued that the reverse deconstructive tactic can be pursued; social relations are always-already “para-” in terms of involving fantasy and non-unified selves forming relationships through processes of projection and introjection. The social/para-social binary breaks down as soon as we move past a commonsense model of coherent, unified selves purely engaged with social “reality.”

Recent scholarship has explored a further way in which the para-social and the social might blur together: via the possibilities of social media. Writing about Lady Gaga fans, or “Little Monsters,” Melissa Click, Hyunji Lee, and Holly Willson Holladay argue that interactions between these fans and Gaga as “Mother Monster” lack any imaginary component:

It was ... clear in our discussions with the interview participants that social media, particularly Twitter, play an important role in the relationships Little Monsters have developed with Mother Monster. Unlike ... “imaginary relationships” ... the Little Monsters we interviewed described a relationship in which they felt they received direct and regular feedback from ... Lady Gaga. (2013: 373)

On this basis, Click, Lee and Willson Holladay suggest that “Social media ... challenges previous knowledge about fan–celebrity relationships by raising questions about the ... distinctions between ‘imaginary’ and ‘real’ relationships” (2013: 377). This raises the issue of how, and to what extent, social media have reconfigured fan–celebrity para-social relations (Cashmore 2014: 100). I will address this in the next section, arguing that social media do not simply “deepen the interactivity possible in the fan–celebrity relationship” (Click et al. 2013: 377), but also make increasingly visible the way in which para-social interactions are multisocial. Far from being dyadic and aimed only at eliciting reciprocity from a favored celebrity, para-social relationships are multiply performed and displayed within the communities of digital fandom.

Multisocial: Practices of Social Media and Sharing Fan–Celebrity Interactions

Fan–celebrity identification may feature “the emotional incorporation of the performer into ... processes of self-formation” (van Krieken 2012: 96), but this incorporation happens alongside identifications with fan culture, with specific fan others on Twitter for example, or with co-present fans at conventions, etc. Speciously isolating the fan–celebrity dyad fails to see how all such interactions are multisocial (typically integrated into fan communities). However, the most frequent scholarly interpretation of social media’s impact on para-social relations has, like the analysis of Click, Lee, and Willson Holladay (2013), been to state that fans and celebrities can now interact more significantly than ever before, with fans increasingly feeling that they have “real” access to the authentic celebrity:

The aspect that is most affected by these new developments ... is the nature of the para-social relation between the fan and the celebrity. Communicating via Twitter or Facebook, fans now can actually engage in a visible and public exchange with their favourite celebrity ... there are now substantial elements of this para-social relationship which no longer look like the simulation of a conventionally social relationship at all. (Turner 2014: 76)

Alice Marwick and danah boyd make the same case, arguing that Twitter has changed “the parasocial dynamic,” fundamentally shifting this away from being an imaginary experience, and replacing that with “Twitter conversations between fans and famous people [that] are public and visible, and involve direct engagement between the famous person and their follower.” This “de-pathologizes the parasocial and recontextualizes it within a medium that the follower may use to talk to real-life acquaintances” (2011: 148).

If “simulation” and “imaginary” aspects drop out of what was previously thought of as para-social interaction, then what is the nature of this reconfigured fan-celebrity relationship? Marwick and boyd point out that

Twitter ... disrupts the expectation of parasociality between the famous person and the fan. The study of celebrity culture has primarily focused on fans as separate from celebrities, but the ability of famous people to read and reply to fans has given rise to new sets of practices ... Celebrity practitioners must harness this ability to maintain ongoing ... connections with their fans, rather than seem uncaring or unavailable. Thus, Twitter creates a new expectation of intimacy. (2011: 156)

Liz Ellcessor (2009) similarly argues that social media are especially good at facilitating inferred intimacy via “access to what seems to be ‘authentic,’ private, backstage star behavior ... After the sharing of such information, fans may make bids for further intimacy by responding through the same social media, and if the star acknowledges them, the sense of intimacy is further heightened.” And P. David Marshall has stressed how social media such as Twitter allow for celebrity performances of a “*public private self*” (2010: 44) where what would conventionally be aspects of private self-identity are publicly played out for the “networked audience” (Marwick 2013: 213). But Marshall notes that the intimacy performed and consumed through the fan-celeb relations of social media can work in an unusually immediate way:

For some celebrities the self-negotiation of the public private self wrests control of the economy of their public persona in a way that resembles the 1950s breakdown of the film studio system ... The ... [next] level is the *transgressive intimate self*. ... The transgressive intimate on-line version of the self is the one motivated by temporary emotion; but it is also the kind of information/image that passes virally throughout the internet because of its visceral quality of being closer to the core of the [celebrity’s] being. (2010: 45)

This “transgressive intimate self” reads as an intensified communication of self-authenticity, seeming to go beyond the stage-managed “public self” of on-message

publicity (McDonald 2000: 114–15), and the “public private” self that incorporates some degree of private material while making judgments about what constitutes too much information. In short, social media like Twitter seem well placed to reconstruct celebrity “authenticity” and experienced fan–celeb “intimacy” by working against other (“old”) media counterpositioned as “official” rather than visceral/immediate. Marshall goes so far as to identify the “intercommunicative” celebrity – needing to stay connected to the networked audience not just through “the ancillary press of the celebrity industry” but also through the labor of the “celebrity themselves in the interpersonal flow of communication” – as a “parasocial self” (2010: 43). Here, despite it being impossible to communicate individually with a multitude of fans “in this shifted on-line culture some effort has to be made” by the celebrity. In place of para-social interaction, then, the “parasocial self” of the celebrity represents intensified “authenticity.” This is not entirely a reconfiguration of older modes of celebrity, though, since in “the era of social media ... the search for the true and the real continues in a manner similar to the way celebrity gossip was a channel in the twentieth century to the more authentic star” (Marshall 2010: 44). At the same time, Marshall (2010) and Marwick and boyd (2011) both emphasize how celebrities are called upon by social media practices to enact emotional labor in new ways, directly performing connectedness to their fans rather than occupying a distant cultural realm (the “celebrity” versus the “fan”).

Marshall’s “parasocial self,” where celebrity is sustained through an “interpersonal flow of communication,” is hence close to what Ellcessor terms the “‘star text of connection’ – a star text that is formed through the creation of social media connections to other people, projects, and audiences” (2012: 47). Ellcessor focuses on the US actress and the star of web series *The Guild*, Felicia Day, observing how Day has used gaming media and social networking sites to build up a “geek” and “gamer” star text which can then be connected to various cult media fan bases in order to promote her work as a subcultural celebrity (2012: 47; Hills 2003). Day also responds to and involves her Twitter followers, with her replies “blending ... [the] social circles” of media professionals and fan amateurs (Ellcessor 2012: 63). However, this does not wholly remove the hierarchy of celebrity and fan, or “media person” and “ordinary person” (Deller 2011: 237; Muntean and Petersen 2009). As Marwick and boyd point out, celebrity is “a co-performance that requires fan deference and mutual recognition of unequal status to succeed – otherwise, the practitioner is famous only in his or her own mind” (2011: 155). Thus, although social media create a sense of fan–celebrity connectedness that seems to transcend, disrupt or normalize the para-social, they nevertheless do so in relation to performative iterations of celebrity authenticity. Affordances of social media encourage this:

These ... include the illusions of “liveness” and interactivity presented online, the quotidian rhythms of interaction, the (possible) lack of media gatekeepers such as publicists, editors, and paparazzi in creating online self-presentations ... Illusions of liveness and interactivity in online media are crucial to experiencing online celebrity as uncontrolled, ongoing, immediate, and “real.” (Ellcessor 2012: 52)

And yet, the newly “authentic” celebrity selves that are performed through social media face a number of difficulties. As Marwick and boyd remind us, there is not just one cultural standard of authenticity in play here. Indeed, notions of authenticity are highly context-dependent, relying “on the definition imposed by the person doing the judging. As in much social media, participants’ understanding of authenticity on Twitter varies” (2010: 124). Due to what Marwick and boyd call “context collapse,” where what would previously have been different social contexts and audiences are brought together on Twitter – that is, your employer, close family and casual acquaintances might all potentially see a tweet depending on who your followers are – Twitter users deploy particular strategies for managing this de-differentiation. Some “refrain altogether from discussing certain [highly personal or sensitive] topics on Twitter, while others balance strategically targeted [i.e. promotional] tweets with personal information” (2010: 124).

But Marwick and boyd draw varied authenticities together into these restricted and coherent Twitter strategies: “authentic” celebrity can be performed by self-editing, and by interspersing material of the “public self” – commodified, official self-promotion – with that of the “public private self,” and even the “transgressive intimate self” on rarer occasions, so as to avoid being seen by followers as overly contrived in informational terms.

By contrast, when reviewing how digital fandom has been studied, Lucy Bennett refuses to offer a master-narrative of Twitter’s impact on para-social relations and newly “authentic” star texts of connection. Rather than simply concluding that para-sociality has been disrupted and nonpathologized, Bennett indicates that “whilst celebrity and fan interactions on Twitter are regarded by some as fostering more direct relations and communications, others view them as engendering illusory and ‘fake’ forms of interactions” (2014: 14). This difference of opinion is not just a scholarly spat: it also occurs within the terrain of popular culture itself. Bennett writes that “while some celebrities, such as Lady Gaga ... speak of strong and genuinely ‘close’ connections with their fans through social media, others, such as Neil Tennant, lament the ‘fake intimacy’ that they view as conjured” (2014: 15). A fascinating issue that this raises is not so much the “context collapse” of Twitter, but rather collisions between fandoms. Pondering how fans might situate themselves in relation to discourses of social media’s communicative authenticity or illusion, Bennett asks:

how would a fan of both Lady Gaga and Neil Tennant negotiate these differences in how the platform is valued and used in terms of communications between artist and fan? ... these instances very much differ between fan cultures, and are dependent on how interactions are framed ... and negotiated within each ... [T]here are no ... overarching theories that can encompass the quite different dynamics that ... arise. (Bennett 2014: 15; also Meyers 2013: 142)

Reconfigurations (and pathologizations) of para-social interaction may, therefore, vary by fandom rather than shifting *tout court* as a matter of social media’s rise. There isn’t straightforwardly “a new kind of star system” at work (Ellcessor 2012: 66), based predominantly on performed connection, intimacy and authenticity,

even if some celebrities may now boost their profiles, or come to prominence in the first place, through being especially entertaining bloggers and tweeters (Burns 2009: 57).

Complicating master-narratives of social media fan-celeb connection from the perspective of celebrity studies, Sarah Thomas provides an argument which mirrors that of Bennett's: "An analysis ... of Twitter usage by celebrities and fans illustrates that, rather than evolving one model [of celebrity] at a time, each one more 'authentic' than the one before, stardom has (and has always had) many different modes and facets" (2014: 244). Furthermore, the social media environment doesn't merely lead to a situation where fans "feel a sense of entitlement to celebrity information and where celebrities no longer have any vestiges of privacy" (Burns 2009: 1); instead, different modes of celebrity/stardom coexist, just as different fandoms have adopted varied discourses of para-social interaction. Thomas rightly observes that accounts stressing how fans and celebrities are now connected via discursive regimes of neo-authenticity miss the fact that "some of the biggest modern stars maintain the traditional classical star's aura of distance and have no presence on Twitter, including George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Keira Knightley, Angelina Jolie ... This helps these phenomenally successful stars to remain elusive and extraordinary, 'knowable' only through gossip and traditional mediation" (2014: 245; Murthy 2013).

Nor is this "aura of distance" – a marked counterstrategy to social media's "public private" and transgressively intimate selves, traditionally linked to movie stardom (Marshall 1997: 187) – restricted only to the absolutely "biggest" of stars. Although he had broken through as a "television star" (Ellcessor 2012: 50–1; Jermyn 2006: 81–2) as a result of playing Sherlock in the BBC TV series of the same name, Benedict Cumberbatch had, and continues to have, no Twitter presence. That Cumberbatch was not yet an A-lister of the stature of, say, George Clooney was evident from the way in which he adopted Clooney in promotional interviews as a role model for his own emergent stardom: "Cumberbatch ... admires the way ... George Clooney has managed celebrity: 'He's a wonderful man to be around. He just wears his fame and who he is as a public persona, and it doesn't seem to cost him, you know'" (Dorris 2013: 27). Far from breaking down para-social distance, Cumberbatch had a friend tweet on his behalf when he wanted to communicate with *Sherlock* fans who had turned out to watch location filming of the third series: "Guys, I have a message from Benedict ... Could those following Sherlock #setlock please NOT post photos. The cast and crew have a long, cold and dangerous night ahead ... He says thanks and sends love xx" (in Porter 2013: 254–5).

It could be argued that this responds to a social media-related expectation of intimacy, but it does so in a highly strategic and selective way, seeking to discipline and police fan activities of set reporting which might otherwise circulate unwanted spoilers online (Hills 2010: 72), as well as perhaps interfering with a night shoot schedule. Rather than forming part of a quotidian Twitter interaction with fans where immediacy can be conveyed, this communication occurs through a go-between and is marked as out-of-the-ordinary. It is also readable as an expression of professional concern from Cumberbatch the actor.

Lynnette Porter suggests that Cumberbatch, never having experienced media fandom himself, finds it difficult to understand why fans would want to repeatedly meet him. Indeed, Porter notes the existence within online fandom of “anecdotal stories about Cumberbatch’s fan encounters. At times he can seem harsh with fans who persistently approach him for multiple autographs or photographs ... saying ‘There is some obsessive behavior, which is quite worrying. I worry for them, not for me’” (Porter 2013: 253). Here, the “fan-staged encounters” identified by Ferris and Harris (2011) are discursively positioned as a problem rather than being univocally celebrated as “authentic” fan–celeb intimacy. A similar representation occurred in Caitlin Moran’s promotional interview for *The Times* ahead of *Sherlock* series two, where Cumberbatch recounted an unusual meeting with a fan:

“One woman came up to me ... and asked me about my favourite cheese. I told her which one – how you chisel away so you can get a little shard that tastes so good, because you’ve worked so hard for it. Then she said, ‘Can you draw the cheese?’ and I’m afraid I said no.” “You know,” he says, both despairingly and indignantly, “it’s *really difficult* to draw cheese.” (Moran 2011: 30)

But what may seem odd to an actor can constitute *fan-cultural authenticity*. Unusual informational requests are one way in which fans can seek to evade the generic scripts and restrictive “tramlines” of fan–celeb communication, standing out in the eyes of celebrities and other fans. Whether or not this was the particular individual described by Cumberbatch is unclear, but there is a website dedicated to “The unexpected asking of cheese” (Holbourn 2012) which accepts celebrity’s drawings as evidence of their cheese preferences. Featuring *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood*, and *Sherlock* stars and producers, among others, this site lists Benedict Cumberbatch’s preferred cheese as Manchego (Holbourn n.d.). It proffers a playful performance of fan identity as a kind of “self-celebritisation” (Smith 2014), positioning this fan as a distinctive “micro-celebrity” (Senft 2008: 25–6). As danah boyd has observed: “Social media ... allows people to enact celebrity practices” (2014: 148) in the absence of fame, though some have questioned whether the term “celebrity” is meaningful here (Turner 2014: 76).

This shift toward micro-celebrity recontextualizes fan–celeb interaction, making “fan-staged” or accidental encounters a source of multisocial fan–fan interaction and sharing. When a fan spotted Cumberbatch going about his business in New Orleans in 2012, for instance, and had a photo taken with him, the image rapidly “circulated among fans online, show[ing] a casual Cumberbatch ... It is not a posed shot, and the actor looks like an average guy, not a carefully coiffed ... performer. Such fan encounters ... are ... likely to be shared online; they illustrate how quickly the actor’s private life can shift in[to] public-persona mode” (Porter 2013: 253–4).

Thus what might be theorized as a moment of fan–celebrity co-presence and a brief bit of “interactional mutuality” becomes more significantly a part of fandom’s ongoing, quotidian and “always on” conversation with itself (Hills 2012: 110). This multisocial interaction between fans, where fan–celeb para-sociality is stitched into fan–fan relations, is further evidenced by the manner in which fandoms now typically demonstrate “self-consciousness of [their] own self-branding” (Smith 2014).

For instance, Cumberbatch's fan base dubbed themselves "Cumberbitches," a fact that the star himself has discussed in interviews (Collis 2014: 40; Dorris 2013: 24). But any such discussion ignores the performed para-social intimacy embedded in the self-branding of a "Cumberbitch" or a "Ben-addict": these are forms of linguistic closeness, near-homophones that play on "Benedict" and "Cumberbatch" by fusing star and fan signifiers. Para-social wordplay places fan-celeb interaction (imagined or not) at the symbolic heart of fans' multisocial exchanges, rather than simply fantasizing a celeb-fan dyadic relationship. Sharing Benedict-related memes like "Cumberbombing" also facilitates fans' mediated interactions, in effect spreading *"the notion of participatory culture itself"* (Shifman 2014: 89) via the "spreadable media" (Jenkins et al. 2013) of Benedict incongruously photoshopped into a range of images in imitation of his photobombing of U2 at the 2014 Oscars.

Fans also entwine fan-fan interactions with favored celebrity signifiers by adopting the celebrity's name on Twitter, say (often marked as a "fan account" to avoid any implication of faking), or through forms of online roleplaying. Paul Booth remarks that

Parasocial theory exists to identify a relationship between the viewer and any persona on television [or other media]. In the digital, however, such individualized relationships are problematized, for ... *any* [online] persona ... is in itself a complete construction. ... [B]y definition ... external knowledge (about the media object ...) is necessary for viewers to grasp the ontological [viewer/persona] distinction. (2010: 158)

In this case, the distance required for para-social relations to operate is not disrupted by fan-celeb social media interactions as such, but instead by fans' symbolic adoption of a celebrity's name, or the creation of fan fiction featuring "real" stars (Busse 2006: 256), along with Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter roleplaying (McClellan 2013: 154; Kalviknes Bore and Hickman 2013: 234). Para-sociality requires an "ontological distinction" between fan and celebrity persona, and although a cursory reading of Twitter profiles can make it clear when fans are performing their emotional closeness to a celebrity like Cumberbatch by appropriating his name, this performative social (media) practice nevertheless stages a signifying collision of fan and celebrity. Like the "trophy" of a photograph acquired via material practices of fandom and shared online, this digital practice self-objectifies and makes communal/social the fans' affective commitment to "their" celebrity. Again, fans display and perform their fandom multisocially in the eyes of multiple imagined beholders.

In this chapter I have considered how para-social fan-celebrity interactions have been (re)valued by equating them with the "social" relations of material fandom, and by aligning them with "real" and enduring experiences of love. I have suggested that the social/para-social binary is, in fact, unsustainable from any perspective – I focused on a psychoanalytic framework – which accepts the multiple, social and divided nature of the self. Theorizing social relationships as formed through introjection and projection, for example, means that they are always-already fantasized and imagined, being inherently "para-"social.

I have also addressed how social media such as Twitter have factored into para-social debates. Twitter has been represented as generating a "new star system" where

celebrity–fan interactions are realized rather than imagined, and where intensified levels of intimacy and neo-authenticity are constructed between fandom and the celebrity’s performed “parasocial self.” But this monolithic narrative neglects to consider how para-social, digital authenticities are multiple, varying both by fandom and in line with different celebrity strategies online. Rather than para-social interaction being rendered obsolete by media-technological progress that brings fans and celebrities closer together, then, I have argued that para-social identifications often continue to form the symbolic, linguistic basis for digital fandom’s celebrity-oriented groupings (e.g., “Cumberbitches”). Para-social interactions are displayed and shared between fans instead of merely working to fantasize a dyadic communion of the individual fan and specific celebrity. The para-social is neither wholly normalized nor displaced within a Web 2.0 social media environment. Instead, it becomes *multisocial*: underpinning fan–fan interactions while also being subordinated to specific fan-cultural discourses/authenticities. And as long as hierarchies between “media people” and “ordinary people” continue to be naturalized then, no matter what kinds of fan–celeb interactions and “micro-celebrity” activities are facilitated within digital culture, a symbolic gap will remain between “celebrity” and “fan” cultural categories, hence giving rise to socially structured fantasies/practices of their collision, meeting, and intersection.

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The Everyday Use of Celebrities

Joke Hermes and Jaap Kooijman

The look, feel and content of media culture have changed over the past decades. There is much more “media” than there used to be and “stars” have multiplied into the new phenomenon of “celebrities,” among them a great many ordinary people (Turner 2014). Practices of everyday media use have also changed. We want to know how celebrities figure in new practices of media use as opposed to the stars and media personalities we had before. What is it that celebrities do for us, as audiences? In the Netherlands, where we live and work, the defining moment for the rise of modern-day celebrity culture has been the introduction of commercial television in 1989, a result of the globalizing media industries. This would suggest that celebrity culture is mostly shaped by corporate power. However, by combining an audience and textual perspective, we will explore how celebrities can be used in everyday life, in line with Graeme Turner’s argument that celebrities are not just commercial currency but also social currency (2014: 36). The extension of our argument is that celebrities are points of reference when taking a position on social issues as well as useful resources in the always ongoing work of identity construction.

Such everyday use of celebrities is difficult to capture methodologically. Inquiring about celebrities, or analyzing the media texts that they appear in and often dominate, automatically assumes that celebrities are important and highly meaningful. Celebrities are, however, not always explicitly meaningful, even though they are still omnipresent in different roles and guises, ranging from interpreter, cultural moderator, and exemplary citizen to ideal partner, “supermom,” and the face of human perfection. To explore what celebrities may do for us when we are not especially aware of them, we combine our work on Dutch popular culture (Kooijman 2013) and everyday media use (Hermes 1995; Hermes and Adolfsson 2006; Hermes and De Graaf 2013), using the prerogative of the long-term media researcher who aims to theorize from empirical material. We return to our earlier work with new questions, a “side-ways” perspective, to see how celebrity functions almost unnoticeably. In this way,

we hope to find patterns emerging that show both the fundamental change in Dutch media culture that allowed contemporary celebrity culture to come into being, as well as how celebrity culture itself changes as a result of its everyday use and usefulness. As a methodology such a “sideways” perspective may be a hard sell, yet we recommend discussing one’s impressions and material (see Allen and Mendick 2013 for a similar strategy) to overcome the limitations of focused research: there are always more stories out there.

As a main point of reference throughout the chapter, we use Linda de Mol, currently the most popular Dutch television host, as well as an actress and media producer (and sister of media mogul John de Mol, famous for introducing the global reality television formats *Big Brother* and *The Voice*). The first section introduces and explores the place and meaning of the precelebrity media personality in everyday media use, and how this has changed, by comparing Mies Bouwman, the most popular Dutch television media personality before the introduction of commercial television in 1989, to Linda de Mol and her fellow celebrity Marco Borsato. Whereas Mies could be perceived as a public person who functioned as an extended family member, Linda is the friendly personification of capitalist entrepreneurial media culture, the Dutch extension of global media logic.

In the second section, Linda features prominently as a commentator on questions of national identity and multiculturalism in the Netherlands during the early 2000s, as expressed in the special “Dutch dream” issue of *LINDA.*, a women’s monthly glossy based on Linda’s celebrity persona. The special issue was intended to present a more positive message about multiculturalism in the Netherlands, to counter the post-9/11 negative political climate after the assassinations of the populist anti-Islam politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004. To showcase the positive sides of multiculturalism, *LINDA.* features the success stories of “ethnic” Dutch celebrities who have made their “Dutch dream” come true. In the third section, in line with our effort not to study celebrities in and for themselves but to understand how celebrity culture is meaningful in everyday life, we will take a closer look at these “ethnic” celebrities featured in the “Dutch dream” issue who also happened to come up in an audience project on humor and the multicultural society. While in the magazine these celebrities are presented as “role models” to be emulated, assuming that celebrity status equals social significance, informants do not respond to them in a moral register. Although role model is in many ways an attractive term, in this case, role model turns out to have little to do with what celebrities “do” for us in everyday life. When they are not center stage, but seen sideways as the many characters that populate media platforms, they are better understood as “social objects” (Kietzman et al. 2011), functioning more as shared points of reference than as models to be emulated.

Before and After the Introduction of Commercial Television

To explore possible everyday use of media personalities before the introduction of commercial television in the Netherlands in 1989, we return to the audience

material from research done a quarter-century ago for *Reading Women's Magazines* (Hermes 1995). This research is specifically relevant as it goes against the "fallacy of meaningfulness," the "unwarranted assumption that all use of popular media is significant" (1995: 16). The women's magazine study extends from domestic weeklies and glossies to gossip weeklies and feminist magazines: the genres recognized by readers. The fact that readers include gossip weeklies is surprising. Equally surprising is how different the meanings and pleasures of reading gossip magazines turn out to be from reading other types of "women's magazines." Whereas reading women's magazines in general is best captured by understanding it as beneficial to the temporary construction of ideal selves, gossip magazine reading relates to a feeling of community and connection, to having a vastly "extended family" consisting of media personalities. Particularly the material on the gossip weeklies provides insight into the everyday use of media personalities.

The introduction of gossip weeklies in the mid-1970s in the Netherlands signals the way in which, before commercial television became a fact, public culture was already changing and indeed commercializing. Two gossip weeklies (*Privé* and *Story*) were introduced by two rival Dutch media groups in the mid-1970s, later joined by a third weekly (*Weekend*). Their high sales figures surprised friend and foe alike. Aimed at those female readers who were not reached by the then domestic weeklies, they found a much wider readership. *Privé*, *Story* and *Weekend* offered some practical advice and horoscopes but mostly stories about international stars, Dutch television personalities, and international and Dutch royalty. Articles carried suggestive headlines, photographic material and a little text. Readers distinguished three types of gossip: malicious gossip and scandal, friendly stories (often focused on babies and weddings), and royalty stories. The long interviews also suggested two different "modes" of reading gossip weeklies: "serious" and "camp." Both modes of reading produced a sense of community much as the interviews in other types of women's magazines can be seen to primarily produce temporary imagined identities of perfect selves.

Serious reading of gossip involves thinking of media personalities as if they are part of your extended family as a reader. The magazines helped create an imagined family that is not threatened by such sociological realities as divorce or by children leaving home. In the interviews, Linda de Mol's predecessor, Mies Bouwman, was mentioned several times in specific relation to the everyday experience of the reader: "When I read about Mies and I see her swollen face. ... That happened to me too, when I had that medication" (in Hermes 1995: 123). There was indignation about wasteful behavior by the then new phenomenon of the sport star. "[Those football players] they're young, they earn a lot, they do what they like. They live [in Italy] and come to Amsterdam to party! What that must cost!" (in Hermes 1995: 131). The bottom line in reading gossip magazines was and is in finding out that the rich, and the high and mighty are, in the end, just people; they belong to the very same world that the readers belong to: "But they are ordinary people for me. You do find that out. You thought some of them were really special. I used to think that, but they are all ordinary people just like us. Beatrix, the queen, or a minister, they are all just like us" (in Hermes 1995: 131). Not all reading of gossip magazines is serious or

well-meaning. There can be great pleasure in making fun of famous people or reveling in the fact that the rich can have an awful time of it, just like anyone else. The very fact that it takes practice to decode gossip magazines, to know when gossip snippets are or are not true, makes it an all the more titillating practice. Going through the interview material a quarter-century later, it is also striking that a theme that came up several times was the alleged homosexuality of singers and showbiz personalities who long since have been openly gay but apparently were just coming out at the time: an unexpected reminder of changing times.

The significance of these quotations as well as the reference to Mies require context to be understood. First of all, football players (a new type of celebrity just coming into being but also the mainstay of the Dutch national team), the queen, a television presenter and show host are all taken together and labeled as “just as ordinary as you and me.” This is the nation as a unified body, no matter how different its limbs. From the perspective of today it would be strange to consider television personality Mies “ordinary,” as 25 years later she is somewhat of a legend (in her eighties now, she occasionally appears on national television) and represents the first generation of “television personalities,” as defined by John Ellis, who argues that television personalities differ from stars because of “their fairly constant presence on the medium rather than their rarity; they are familiar rather than remote” (1992: 107; on Mies see also de Leeuw and Mustata 2013). An on-screen television announcer, Mies rose to national prominence by hosting the first Dutch 24-hour live charity telethon in 1962. She is widely loved yet also controversial, having received her share of criticism for dating her still-married and “socialist” “boyfriend” (whom she eventually married) and for appearing in satirical television programs. She presented nationally watched talk and game shows. In the column she wrote for the women’s magazine *Margriet*, Mies spoke candidly about the verbal abuse and threats she received from viewers who felt offended by her lifestyle choices. Apart from a single female secretary of state, Mies was the first woman to come to national prominence as a professional in a public media landscape otherwise populated by men in all the positions and roles that matter.

The gossip magazine material was collected in 1989, exactly the year that commercial television was introduced in the Netherlands. Two important changes can be recognized to mark the differences between the Dutch media landscape before and after the coming of commercial television. First, the number of celebrities and their visibility vastly increased, to include ordinary people who become celebrities due to their appearance in reality shows, for instance; and there was the rise of multidisciplinary celebrities performing different roles (Hermes 2005). Second, the eventual introduction of daily showbiz news programs such as *RTL Boulevard* (2001–present) and *SBS Shownieuws* (2003–present) replaced the importance of the three gossip weeklies as sources of stories about celebrities. These shows were based on American television formats (most explicitly *Entertainment Tonight*). Whereas in the early 2000s they depended heavily on news about global (read Anglo-American) stars for content, soon the programs focused on national and local celebrities, thereby not only becoming the main competitors to the print gossip

weeklies, but also creating a new media space for Dutch celebrities (or “BN-ers” meaning “well-known Dutch people”).

In this changing media landscape, the use of the media personality as an extended family member seems to change as well, a shift embodied by Linda de Mol. Although she can be seen as the “heir” of Mies, Linda’s initial “favorite daughter-in-law” image in the late 1980s and early 1990s was soon replaced by a far more glamorous image. Unlike Mies, Linda is not only a popular television host, but also has a successful career as television and film actress and as television producer. She is a celebrity brand, as is exemplified by the success of *LINDA.*, the monthly women’s magazine centered on her persona. Launched in 2003, the magazine was inspired by Oprah Winfrey’s *O* magazine, and similar to her American counterpart, Linda is featured on the cover of each issue; also like Oprah, she always emphasizes her personal experience and interest in specific topics to help her predominantly female readership relate to these themes (Kooijman 2013: 134). Whereas Mies was first and foremost an individual “real” person, a family member you felt you knew, Linda is more a brand, a celebrity who uses her persona to connect to her audience. This difference has little to do with both women’s individual talents; instead the difference is related to the watershed change in the Dutch media culture.

So far, little audience research on Dutch celebrities has been done. Notable exceptions are two audience studies done on the fans of pop singer Marco Borsato, who is, like Linda, a multidisciplinary celebrity, active as a recording artist, a live performer at stadium concerts, a music coach in the television talent show *The Voice of Holland*, an ambassador for charity organization War Child, a co-owner of the – now bankrupt – media production company The Entertainment Group, and the hero of the action movie *White Light* (2008). The two fan studies (Chow and de Kloet 2008; Reijnders et al. 2014) focus on Marco’s ordinariness (“he is just a regular guy”) as a characteristic of Dutch popular culture, celebrating ordinariness in stark contrast to the star’s extraordinariness. Whether or not recognized as specifically Dutch, such a combination of ordinariness and extraordinariness is a common element of celebrity outside of the Netherlands as well (Dyer 1998; Lusted 1998). Although insightful about the possible meanings of celebrities to their invested fans, these fan studies say little about the everyday use of celebrities by “ordinary people,” the “non-fans,” recognized by Jonathan Gray as “the comfortable majority.” Their casual use of cultural texts is just as significant as the investment of fans and anti-fans (Gray 2003: 74). Like Gray, we suspect that we would do well not to overestimate the importance of celebrities to media audiences. To avoid the “fallacy of meaningfulness,” we turn now to more recent audience research in which informants refer to celebrities without specifically being invested in them.

National Politics and Everyday Celebrity Use

In February 2005, the special “Dutch dream” issue of *LINDA.*, the popular glossy monthly women’s magazine based on Linda de Mol’s persona, was published. The magazine’s cover showed Linda seated at a festive dinner table surrounded by

“ethnic” Dutch celebrities whose successful careers made them exemplary (the title “Dutch dream” is in English, an obvious reference to the “American dream”). The special issue was intended to show the positive side of multiculturalism to counter the negative political climate in the Netherlands, following the assassinations of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh. The populist politician Fortuyn, running on an anti-Islam ticket, was assassinated by a white Dutch environmental fundamentalist. Nine days later, he posthumously won the national elections. His death led to a massive collective mourning, reminiscent of the British response to the death of Princess Diana in 1997. Two years later, on November 2, 2004, a Moroccan Dutch Muslim fundamentalist in the streets of Amsterdam assassinated the white Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Like Fortuyn, Van Gogh was a highly outspoken critic of the Islam, especially where the position of women was concerned. As prominent media personalities, both Fortuyn and Van Gogh were part of celebrity culture, featured in the serious press as well as the tabloids (Buruma 2006; Kooijman 2013: 121–45; Van der Veer 2006).

The two assassinations not only shocked those in the political realm, resulting in a pronounced swing to the right, but also reverberated in popular culture, providing significant counternarratives. For example, the comedy feature film *Shouf Shouf Habibi!*, directed by Albert ter Heerdt, focuses on a group of Moroccan Dutch youngsters and pokes fun at misunderstandings between Moroccan immigrant culture and the (white) Dutch mainstream. The movie became the box-office hit of 2004, turning the Moroccan Dutch actors Mimoun Oaïssa and Najib Amhali into stars. The movie’s success resulted in a temporary subgenre of Moroccan Dutch comedies. As this and other examples suggest, the public discourse about multiculturalism and national identity – within both the political and the pop-cultural realms – is multifaceted, highlighting both the troublesome and funny sides of these serious issues (Kooijman 2013: 125). In both realms, the role of celebrities is significant: they embody and articulate contradictory feelings in relation to multiculturalism, national identity, and culture politics.

In her editorial, Linda explains that the special issue was nearly not made. After the assassination of Theo van Gogh, “everything went wrong.” Here Linda functions as a mouthpiece for her readers, the “ordinary” people: “I discovered that I had thoughts I’d never had before, and of which I am definitely not proud. Suddenly it was *my* Netherlands and they’d better not think *they* can tell us to shut up or tell us how to live” (in Kooijman 2013: 134). By recognizing and expressing her blunt and “politically incorrect” first reaction, Linda “confesses” to her readers, enabling them to have their own possible feelings of intolerance acknowledged and redeemed. Then, countering her own initial reaction, Linda returns to the need for a more positive perspective on multiculturalism, presenting her “Dutch dream” of a society that celebrates ethnic and cultural diversity by presenting her dinner guests as “role model” figures. Inside the magazine, all the “ethnic” celebrities recount their individual success stories, focusing on talent and hard work, whereas issues as structural racism and discriminatory practices of the entertainment industry remain unmentioned, conforming to the success myth of stardom rooted in the American dream (Dyer 1998: 42). In this way, celebrity has a double function: although Linda presents herself as

an ordinary woman shocked by events, she is clearly what King calls “a favoured being” (2008: 121) and exceptional figure, and her outstanding “ethnic” role models are not only likewise exceptional figures, they are presented as aspirational examples of a new multicultural collective.

This new multicultural collective is exactly what our humor and the multicultural society audience research project had been designed to explore (Hermes and Adolfsen 2006). Interviews for the project had been planned just before Van Gogh was killed in 2004. With some misgivings, the project started regardless and ran for two years (2004–6). Its goal was to inquire into social mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Jokes and humor are generally considered to play an important part “in how we think of ourselves, and as a result how we interact with others” (Lynch 2002: 425). Celebrities are present almost incidentally in the material but significantly differently from the gossip project. While “community” is the heuristic term to use for the gossip readers and their feeling that they know and are connected to the media personalities they like, in the humor project celebrities are less extended family members or objects of desire (Stacey 1994) but they do provide connectivity. More than in the Borsato fan material, it becomes clear that celebrities are used as nodal points in the social tapestry, providing reference.

None of the informants, all of whom are young adults in their twenties, use the extended family frame found in the older material. They have a more distanced way of recognizing the social role of celebrities when discussing what makes them laugh. In itself laughter is difficult to talk about and explain. Its magic does not easily carry across contexts. “You need to have been there,” interviewees often say, when trying to recount a hilarious situation, a joke or a prank. One such anecdote is about a recently deceased popular folk singer called André Hazes, whose hard drinking and stressful lifestyle caught up with him at age 53. Although Hazes can be perceived as the epitome of Amsterdam-based white working-class culture, he had recently been embraced by the cultural elite, largely because of an extremely popular yet “high-brow” 1999 award-winning documentary (directed by John Appel) about his career released five years before his death in 2004.

The following anecdote is about Hazes and is told by “Charissa,” a 21-year-old Surinamese Dutch student and waitress. It is a simple story of an outing with colleagues after work. On a whim they decide to do a drive-by of Hazes’ family home, which clearly is inappropriate and intrusive behavior considering that the family is in mourning. Yet, the group of colleagues thoroughly enjoyed their boundary-crossing behavior and continue their “excursion” by going to the café where Hazes used to hang out. Both places have no special aura for them. It is difficult to say whether or not they liked him, as they do not seem to have a specific opinion about him. Hazes appears to function merely as a common reference in their discussion, as a celebrity they all knew. As Charissa tells the story:

It is a really nice team, fun colleagues. We have become friends. We all like to work there. We work when other people have time off ... After work we like to have a drink or do something outrageous. Everything that is out of the ordinary, we like to do. One night we went swimming. One time we drove by André Hazes’ house. We were playing cat

and mice, with the boys in one car and we in another. And we wanted to go swimming, and we wanted to see if the guys could follow us and we ended up near where André Hazes lived, so we thought, we'll go there because he'd just died. We wanted to take a look but couldn't. The police were there, so we tore out again. Then we went back and parked the car there for half an hour. It was impressive really: flowers and cards, beer, plates, café stuff. We looked at everything. Then the police came to ask whether we were selling beer there. They had been given a call that people were selling beer in front of Hazes' house. They came to ask if it was us, but it wasn't. Then they asked us to leave in a really friendly way. ... It started as a joke but when we were there it was not really funny. But in the car it was hilarious. Us taking a turn, them taking a turn. Us trying to get away. And phoning all the time: "Where are you going?" "Where are you?" while we were following them. ... Going to Hazes' house wasn't planned. But when we passed nearby we thought: why is there a roadblock here? And then we thought: of course the man is dead. So we drove past the roadblock. ... I love it, doing things that you shouldn't.

We quote the anecdote at length, as it reveals how incidentally yet significantly celebrity plays a role in this mixed multiethnic group. Whereas devoted fans of André Hazes visit his home and favorite café as places of pilgrimage, Charissa and her colleagues just happen to come across these places that nevertheless are meaningful to them because Hazes is a celebrity. Although Hazes clearly means less to them, as non-fans, than he does to his fans, Hazes still functions as a shared reference. During the remains of the interview, Charissa's examples of laughing and having fun all stop short when she feels that jokes or caricatures become racist; the Hazes anecdote clearly feels like a safe example to give. The outing both celebrates and ridicules the celebrity of Hazes, with the group's laughter signaling a mixture of unease and exhilaration.

Apparently at the time of the interview (six months after Hazes died), the celebrity Hazes has become a good stand-in for all the discomfort and unease about multicultural relations that linger in the Dutch public realm just after the murder of Van Gogh, six weeks after Hazes' death. On the one hand, Hazes appears very much not to be a part of the tension that centers on Islam; he is just a popular working-class singer whose death has nothing to do with politics. On the other hand, he is also an appropriate symbol of the jingoist populist right-wing sentiments that are voiced in the wake of the deaths of Fortuyn and Van Gogh both, particularly because his celebrity crosses class but not ethnic boundaries. His funeral service was held in the Arena sports stadium (home of Amsterdam football club Ajax) and attended by 45,000 people. Organized by his record company, the service was like a stadium concert, with pop stars performing some of Hazes' biggest hits. The service was televised live on national television (TROS, September 27, 2004), attracting an estimated audience of more than 5 million, roughly 30 percent of the nation's population. Excluding sports events, the funeral service of Hazes was the most-viewed program on Dutch television in 2004. A monument to broadcast television's nation-building, it had more viewers than the live televised funeral services of former queen Juliana in March and of her husband Prince Bernhard in December that same year. This massive popularity may indicate a collective need for "authenticity" and "belonging" in difficult

times but does not exclude the possibility that a large part of the audience was just interested in the spectacle. The anecdote as told by the Surinamese Dutch Charissa is significant in that it suggests that Hazes' celebrity did not have a different meaning for "ethnic" Dutch youngsters than for white noninvested media users. Charissa's mixed group of friends appear to be typical incidental viewers who shared in celebrating and ridiculing Hazes' celebrity.

Humor, laughter, and jokes can be a means of recasting social impressions, representations, and relations. The safer the cultural climate, the more room to use them. In 2004 and 2005 such social space was not available. Unsurprisingly, most of the examples given by the interviewees are bland and come from the realm of professional entertainers and global pop culture. The Surinamese Dutch comedian Jörgen Rayman, best known for his comedy show on public television, is mentioned regularly. He does caricatures, among them a drag impersonation of auntie Es, a Surinamese woman wearing traditional folkloric dress. Rayman is generally perceived as "safe" – no danger to the status quo – his humor is politically correct and not much is known about his private life. He is one of the "ethnic" celebrities featured on the cover and inside of the *LINDA* magazine's "Dutch dream" issue. Together with Moroccan Dutch comedian Najib Amhali, he performed a comedy sketch during the public television broadcast to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Queen Beatrix as the reigning monarch of the Netherlands (TROS, April 30, 2005). It included jokes about drug smuggling (a Surinamese stereotype) and petty crime (a Moroccan stereotype). In the interviews, Jörgen Rayman is as an excellent example to give when talking about multiculturalism and laughter. As a celebrity he is neither in the older category of the distant relative, nor in the newer category of both a real and ordinary person and a media phenomenon. Rather, he functions as a social object by means of which one can politely disconnect. He helps keep distance, and allows conversations (or interviews) to steer away from immersion or engagement. Another reference often mentioned in the interviews is the "Fresh Prince of Bel Air" (played by Will Smith), the main character of the American sitcom of the same name (NBC, 1990–6) that is rerun in syndication on Dutch television regularly. Like Rayman, Will Smith is "safe," a "clean celebrity" who functions as a globally acceptable challenge to assumptions about race and ethnicity, an "ethnic" example that fits perfectly in the double frame of comedy: simultaneously challenging and reconfirming the status quo (Marc 1997). Apparently, the celebrity is not necessarily doubly encoded and they can become "floating signifiers," as easy to talk about as the weather.

The second round of interviews for the humor project allows for a little more precision in pinpointing everyday celebrity use. They are more upbeat and make even clearer how celebrities are what Kietzman et al. (2011) call a "social object," referencing Engeström. While "social" implies that interactions are crucial, Engeström argues that sociality is about the *objects* that mediate between people (Kietzman et al. 2011: 245). Kietzman et al. discuss social media and point out the importance of photos on Flickr, videos on YouTube, indiemusic on MySpace, and so on, as objects that mediate sociality. Rayman and Will Smith have already been seen as examples suggesting that celebrities can function in a similar way to the sociality of objects. We understand and talk about celebrities as bounded associative knowledge that can be

a means of exchange, shorthand or code in talking, in this case, about Dutch social relations. In the second round of interviews, there are again numerous references to television comedy and to stage comedians. In these interviews, these public performers are mentioned as more positively meaningful, while they, again, fairly clearly reflect recent Dutch history. Enabled by popular movies such as the aforementioned *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* and television series that feature Moroccan Dutch characters, they are a local point of reference that it is now “okay” to use. In contrast to the earlier interviews, references are not intended as disconnection: some revel in the success of a new generation of Moroccan Dutch, and take great pride in their success. Others use the new celebrities to unleash their anger and hurt at the continued exclusion of non-native Dutch and the populist reign of Islamophobic politics.

Comedy, as David Marc (1997) has shown, is a delicate balance between upsetting and reconfirming the status quo. Humor can be used to show how a genre is a strait-jacket or a force of liberation and a site of self-referential jokes. It can also be used to show how the public space for Moroccan Dutch is limited to that of the prankster or the clown. A telling example is Najib Amhali, mentioned above, a Moroccan Dutch actor (starring in *Shouf Shouf Habibi!*) and stand-up comedian. Regardless of the position taken by (Moroccan Dutch) informants on the compass of emotions experienced by the “new” Dutch (whether from postcolonial or migrant labor forebears), Amhali is perceived as a “hero” and as a “new Dutch” celebrity. The man and his work are not mentioned in the older frames of gossip or camp, his personal life is not discussed. Instead, Amhali appears to be an embodied sign of success. As such, he connects as a social object, personifying new citizenship. Talking about him, naming him as an example, even when sharing the pain of racist exclusion, is sharing the hope for a nonracist future. Amhali is a celebrity of the “hero” kind. As one informant says: “Rest assured, Najib Amhali is always welcome in all Moroccan Dutch homes.” Like Linda, Amhali is both a currency and an embodied sign, the first in her multiplatform daily presence, the other as a combination of performer and political persona.

Humor is used to do serious identity work: to keep one’s distance from sensitive areas (racism, Islam), or to expedite social integration and upward mobility. It can be a relay for feelings of anger and hurt. The humor and laughter material also provides the sideways insight into celebrity culture we are looking for. In the earlier gossip interviews, media personalities are shared as imagined extended family members who help build a sense of community, sustained by the continuous shared calibrating of interpretations of human behavior and psychology that is gossip. This double-edged practice is both normalizing, in a Foucauldian sense, and an important social power mechanism and a means of connecting with others by getting to know their sense of the world and expectations of life (Meyer Spacks 1985). In the later interviews, this material-sociological view of celebrity culture hardly applies. André Hazes, Jörgen Rayman, the Fresh Prince, and Najib Amhali are not objects of speculation and there is no great interest or stake in how they are doing privately. While admired or enjoyed or simply well-known, these celebrities provide a different type of discursive service. Rather than the imagined extended family member in communities of gossip and camp, they are markers of sociality. They help to

connect. Being part of commercialized media culture, having as it were a “price” on their heads, clearly does not prevent these celebrities from also having direct use value, of being on offer for identity work. This is not always the case, as the news project, discussed in the next session, makes clear.

The Fallacy of Role Models

From distant relation to figures linking the fleeting world of the media and the world of everyday concerns, to social objects and embodied signs: celebrities are useful in many ways, especially since older forms of meaningfulness do not disappear without a trace. Intriguingly, national culture is more important than one would assume given that celebrity culture is so strongly related to global capitalism. And even more interestingly, national context can promote a preference for highly meaningful celebrities but also for virtually “empty” figures, “clean celebrities” who are not overloaded with (unwanted) associated meanings. In either case, celebrities are social objects, means of exchange in and between communities. Seen as such, the notion of the celebrity as “role model” is problematic. Linda suggests in her “Dutch dream” issue that celebrities will have a certain standing which will make us want to emulate them and conform to the meritocratic ideal of the American Dream. Is there any purchase to Linda’s suggestion that “ethnic” Dutch celebrities can function as such? Do we link celebrities to political and sociocultural ideals?

“Role model” as a term was well established before 1990s global media culture, for instance, in sports stardom (Whannel 2002). The concept interestingly raises the extent to which everyday media use can be manipulated by celebrity culture. Can celebrity culture command moral weight, does it motivate? Or is it merely a medium of exchange and incidental identity construction? One of the celebrities featured prominently in Linda’s “Dutch dream” issue is Moroccan Dutch rapper Ali B. Like the other “ethnic” Dutch celebrities he is interviewed about his success story. Again like the others, Ali does not mention structural discrimination or racism but prefers to stress the importance of hard work and believing in one’s destiny, conforming to the meritocratic dream narrative (Kooijman 2013: 135–6). This was an interesting choice for the star Ali B, who prefers his stage name “Ali B” over his full name, Ali Bouali, to mimic and counter the practice in Dutch mainstream press of depicting Moroccan youth as potential criminals – or worse, terrorists. He rose to fame in 2004, the year Theo van Gogh was murdered, and was soon the most popular rapper in the Netherlands. With Marco Borsato, he recorded songs to promote the War Child charity, which reinforced his image as a “bridge builder” between different ethnic groups in Dutch society, and as the “pet Moroccan” of the Dutch white establishment (Kooijman 2013: 114–18).

If Ali B is indeed a role model, we would expect to see his name surface in the most recent of the research projects used here. This is a participant design project that started in 2010. It focuses on the possibility of using “role models” to engage urban youth as news consumers and citizens (Hermes and De Graaf 2013). For the web-based news project, the research team happened to look for what are popularly

known as “role models”: successful people from a specific group or subculture who have gained socially accorded and applauded status. Such celebrities perhaps could be convinced to lend their public identity to the project by writing a column or by providing exemplary news interpretations and debating skills for a constituency of urban youth. In 2006 informants said that Najib Amhali would be welcome in all Moroccan Dutch homes. Who is welcome in the early 2010s? Who is admired, seen as an informal leader, as a cultural hero? While the news forum is still under development, a fairly large set of interviews is available, all with urban youth (mostly Moroccan Dutch) by a mix of nonwhite Dutch students. Linda and the research team both turn out to be wrong in thinking that role model as a term resonates with those who are invited to model themselves. Informants do not feel connected to celebrity “role models.” The whole role model notion may have an unfortunate double meaning, with the positive meaning (successful individual from specific community) canceled out by its negative meaning: a form of discipline by example rather than inspiration. Ali B, however, is mentioned in the material and spoken of fondly in typical star discourse. “He has remained such an ordinary guy” and “he deserves his success,” combined with somewhat snide remarks about the millions they think Ali B makes. Most often his humor is mentioned, and the way he uses humor to “address not only Moroccan but other current issues as well.” It is pointed out several times that Ali B, because of his humor, is able to get his message across to a broad audience, including Moroccan Dutch and white Dutch.

In responses to questions about role models, Ali B does not qualify. Informants recognize (one of) their parents as possible role models, not celebrities. As interviewee Ibrahim recalls: “My father came to the Netherlands at a really young age from Morocco. He came to the Netherlands and did not master the language at all. I really respect him for that.” Parents are seen as deserving of their sons’ and daughters’ respect contrary to celebrities, who are a much more mixed bunch when it comes to their fame. Allen and Mendick (2013) suggest on the basis of a similarly widespread empirical set of projects as ours that young people participate in wider criticism of what in Britain is called the “celebrity chav” or “reality TV star.” Such celebrities are considered “undeserving” and “undesirable” as they are “positioned as lacking moral *and* economic value: their fame is constructed as accidental, improper, achieved not through labour (hard work, education, training or the application of talent and ability) but through luck, manipulation or proximity to other celebrities” (Allen and Mendick 2013: 79, emphasis in original). While Allen and Mendick see gender and class as primary mechanisms in determining how everyday use of celebrities is structured for young people, in the Netherlands race and ethnicity are the more dominant line of demarcation. We agree, though, that role models are overused in promotional campaigns, often presented as a neoliberal incentive for self-improvement. Given this discursive frame, it cannot be surprising that the use of celebrity in everyday life has changed. This is not so much due to changes in celebrity culture itself, but to the more and more insistent neoliberal frame used to exclude groups that are seen as possible obstacles in the smooth running of economic, social and political welfare. While celebrities can provide a connecting moment, or be objects of sociality, they can also be placed at a distance. For mostly inwardly turned social groups, such as

Moroccan Dutch youth, who have little confidence in the world outside their own community after over a decade of Islam-bashing, that surely is an understandable choice.

Conclusion

It turns out to be the case that Linda is as wrong as we are to assume that celebrities have great motivational power across media platforms into daily life unless chartered to do so (e.g. by fans). Role models are not what celebrities are used for in everyday life. The material does allow us to show how celebrity culture puts us to work as audiences. They are far more than mere tools in interactive identity construction. They help determine “normality” and the boundaries of acceptable behavior and self-presentation.

Turner argues that we are “witnessing a new process of identity formation as media content mutates [in which] [c]elebrity is playing an increasingly important role” (2014: 93). We have become more and more embedded in what Marshall calls “a presentational culture,” in which celebrity provides models for the production of a public self (Turner 2014: 94, quoting Marshall), something we widely feel we have to do. Allen and Mendick (2013) make clear what a tricky process this is, with neoliberal frames focused on achievement and frames of respectability vying for dominance, or, as the case may be, the protection of parental culture under siege. Media culture pressures us to prove our cultural capital (thereby projecting our expected economic value and income) and be carefully critical of what kind of fame and celebrity are really merited. Celebrity culture is thus linked to what has been called “immaterial labor,” the labor “that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” (Lazzarato 1996: 133) and that most of us engage in unwittingly in the realm of mass popular culture. If celebrity culture is presentational culture, and if celebrities are used as something to measure oneself and others against in processes of identity construction, normalization and cultural criticism, then celebrity culture puts us to work. It makes us query who we are and whether we are OK; it urges us to commodify ourselves.

Using a sideways analysis and moving beyond the analysis of single texts and fan studies, the everyday use of celebrities takes on firmer shape. Evidently, audiences can choose to use celebrities in more or less engaged ways. They can invest in celebrities, whether critically or appreciatively, or they can use them as mere markers in the social and cultural realm. Celebrities are accepted as a given in commercial media culture, as is commercial culture’s dictum that the consumer is king. Celebrities may have charisma bestowed on them by the magic of being in and of the media; in everyday life they are held to account for their usefulness in the ongoing negotiation about society’s (or, indeed, the nation’s) needs, burdens, challenges and faults, whether as example (good or bad) or point of reference. Last but not least, our sideways approach suggests that even if global commercial culture has resulted in the end of national public media cultures, audiences have since put celebrities to use to build new senses of national belonging.

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Exposure

The Public Self Explored

P. David Marshall

Something has changed. These are prophetic words that provoke all sorts of anxieties and anticipations and it is a major challenge to a researcher to show they are true. In this chapter, I want to capture a changed “structure of feeling” in contemporary culture that I think is best encapsulated through the word and concept of “exposure.” Exposure, conceptually, is a way to express what we are collectively experiencing – individual *by* individual and individual *to* individual. If we take the variations in meanings of the word exposure, it allows us to analyze our contemporary world where the public self is highly privileged. Exposure by definition expresses the cultural power of technology in “fabricating the image,” “the attention of the general public,” “the selling and exhibition of products,” as well as “riskiness” and being “subject to external influences” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2013). This chapter will unpack this new moment of public visibility, from its historical connections with establishing reputation and significance, to its celebrity iconicity and the development of the visible presentation of different boundaries of public and private, and finally to how the individual is more than invited to participate in a world of general exposure and learns to inhabit the risks that such a world entails. What is revealed in this exposition of the expansion of the public self is that it is intimately and intricately connected to celebrity culture, which in its experimentations with the presentation of the public self and revealed self over the last century has served as the key pedagogical model for the contemporary moment and its use and relation to images of the self. The new public self is both dependent on and closely identified with the tropes of public identity of our most famed and infamous. The chapter is divided into sections which pick up on each of the etymological origins of the word exposure noted above, to help identify both the various contemporary meanings of the term and their relationship to the history of the exposed image, and then continue with an exploration of how that particular form of exposure relates to and has led to our current moment of the ubiquity of the exposed public self.

Technological Change

Exposure: A chemical reaction in photographic development which fabricates the image. (OED, 2013)

The image is perhaps the key to understanding the changed contemporary condition. For almost two centuries, we have exposed ourselves to the imprint of the photograph. From its earliest incarnations, there was a focus on the portrait in its translation from the painterly portrait of only the elite to its exposure of the middle class in those nineteenth-century iterations that were provisioned by the technology. As Hearn's work on *cartes de visite* revealed, the interplay of status and photography was well in place by the 1860s, as millions of portrait cards of everyday and famous individuals were regularly exchanged like postcards (Hearn 2013). The capacity to be widely spread and exposed came early in the production of photography, as did the desire – particularly with the *cartes de visite* – to link one's images to the famed and famous: the value of one's own collection of *cartes* bestowed a power of personal connection and prestige. In a similar vein, photographers' reputations were built on photographing the most famous.

The technology of the photograph was very much about exposure – a chemical composition when exposed to light produced a negative image of reality that was reversed through a further chemical process for exhibition. There are several elements in the history of this exposure technology which are of particular importance. First of all, in those first decades of the craft the photographic exposure demanded an expertise that was professionalized and, in style of production, replicated the artist's studio. Early photography had a style and composition of "singularity": at the very least, the image produced was valuable and represented something unique, with different tints and casings used to highlight the unique nature of the photograph. Daguerreotypes, the first generation of the photograph, were produced on a single, individual plate (Perich 2011). However, the reality of the photograph in the near future was very different from this constructed singularity: the photograph as a technology was infinitely reproducible and any particular image could be used repeatedly. As the technology simplified, the capacity to take a photograph likewise became much easier. With that ease in production, multiple photographs would be taken of any particular event or any sitter. Photographers became adept over time at being able to discern the best exposure to be processed and developed into a photograph from their negatives and proof sheets. The technology thus permitted the capacity for an industry and business to advance. In the American context, one of the first successful business models that relied on multiple reproductions of photographs was the yearbook or album for colleges and universities. For instance, the Massachusetts photographer George K. Warren successfully provided school yearbooks for Harvard, Brown, and Dartmouth, among many others, including the University of Michigan, by the 1850s (Perich 2011: 2–3). Photography as a technology was used to document graduating classes, their professors, and a series of activities. What is curious in this early stage of the technology of reproduction was that

the contents and the covers were somewhat individualized for each student/client. Nonetheless, the records and images were designed to focus on both achievement and reputation. The yearbook has continued as a mainstay of the profession of photography and in many ways was a direct precursor – as its name implies and as its origins within the university system underline – of contemporary Facebook.

Reproducibility onto simple surfaces such as paper, achieved in the first decade of photography, allowed the photograph to be used effectively in the development of images and exposure in the press – first as engravings based on photographs in newspapers and magazines that could be reproduced ad infinitum, and then later the photographic images were used directly (by 1867 as half-tones in magazines and by 1880 in newspapers; Keller 2011: 146) – a reality that was commonplace by the 1890s (Peres 2008: 38). These technical qualities of photographic reproduction emerging in the last 25 years of the nineteenth century allowed for a trifurcating photographic industry of exposure. First came the professional photographers who catered to the populace in the tradition of the yearbook: they worked to document people in typically formal settings. Second, by the 1890s, there was an elite group of photographers which included photojournalists (Keller 2011: 145) who were employed by newspapers and magazines to document what was seen to be significant and ultimately newsworthy. By 1913, this second group of professional photographers included those commissioned to photograph the rich, beautiful and famous for the new illustrated and fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, launched in 1892, and a subindustry of glamour photography grew (Checefsky 2008: 85). The third element of the photography industry was the emergence of the amateur photographer: dependent on easy-to-operate cameras and rolls of film that could be developed by industry labs operated by the camera companies themselves, such as Eastman Kodak, this served to expand the dimension of exposure of the self in the twentieth century.

Each sector of the photography industry developed somewhat differently in the twentieth century and in reverse order to their former nineteenth-century power. Most dramatically, the third sector of amateur photography had exploded by the beginning of the last century with the production of cameras such as the Brownie by Kodak for 1 dollar in the United States (Lothrop 1978: 1), thereby making the technology of photography accessible to millions of people worldwide. The technology also was an elemental part of the media industry, the second sector of the industry and its construction of a powerful second world of images and exposures where the famed and the powerful were made visible. This visibility of the famous was significantly different than the icon of the monarch that had provided public visibility in earlier centuries via coins and currency, and certainly beyond the singularity of the image of portraits of the famous and the powerful that few saw with any regularity. The focus on personality and stars migrated and expanded, partially through photography and magazines, from the theatrical world to the film world in the early decades of the twentieth century (Staiger 1991). Magazines, through both feature profiles and advertisements, focused on the famed. In the early editions of *Photoplay* and *Moving Picture World*, famed players were used to build film audiences and loyalties with film companies. By the middle of the century, magazines such as *Life* that focused on the public self in photo-essays began producing color

photographs both for the cover and within their pages (Garner 2008: 78–81). By the second decade of the twentieth century, the professional photographer beyond those working for media outlets – the first and largest sector of the photographic industry in the nineteenth century – began also producing the publicity photo portrait, the “eight-by-ten” glossy for the portfolio of any aspiring actor, used to announce them to prospective casting directors and talent agents and also easily reproduced on the playbill if the actor was successful in landing a part.

In a more general sense, personalized exposure came in these three very clear forms via photographic technology and remained with some consistency up until the digital generation and distribution of images in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Thus, what we could call a formal social world became the domain of the professional photographer, with works commissioned for weddings or school photos and, on a more regular basis in the American middle class, for the annual family Christmas card portrait sent to family, friends and business acquaintances. The public world was clearly connected to the deployment of publicity photographs for the famous and those desiring fame, and both of these groups were very small. The third form was the private photograph which was taken by family members, generally of themselves. This kind of exposure ended up in family photo albums or was saved for family slide shows – representing for Bourdieu a middlebrow and highly structured form of expression (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1990) – while the professional photographs were generally displayed on mantelpieces as the more proper version of family members (see, for example, Kuhn 1995).

There is no question that technologically speaking the photography of the self was widely distributed before the digital era; nonetheless, digital technology provided a changed sense of possibility in a number of directions that only makes sense once one understands this history of photographic exposure. The first of these clear transformations related to instantaneity. Digital technology related to photography connects it to television and electronic technologies and their capacity to construct images. This kind of insight is less significant than that these formations of images have the possibility of being more fleeting. It should be remembered that one of the difficulties in early television was actually recording what was produced and early television's images were not archived with ease. Digital photography – like television – produces an instant image. The former development time, and even the time spent in taking the role of exposed film for development to the pharmacy or photo-kiosk, vanishes with digital photography. The closest precursors to this sense of instantaneity in photography were the Polaroid Land cameras of the early 1960s and 1970s (originally developed in less portable structures in 1947) and their commercially located cousins, the photo booths at fairs, arcades and train stations – where within minutes the image would gradually appear on the photographic paper pushed from the camera/machine itself. The speed of “production” of a digital camera allows for instant perusal at least as a digital image, making the appearance of a Polaroid photo seem very slow. Even more remarkable in this history of digital photography was its migration to other devices as an added application. Thus, by the late 2000s, it was standard for a mobile phone to have the capacity to take photos. With more widespread use of tablets and iPads, their use as a camera was normalized. Not only

were photos instantly produced, the constant presence of cameras made it possible for any moment to become an image.

A second difference between digital photography and its roll-of-film precursor was sheer cost. If we look back in time a Polaroid image in 1960 would cost up to 3 dollars an exposure. The cost of development of a roll of film varied greatly over the twentieth century, but by the 1970s it could cost up to 10 or 15 US dollars to develop 24–36 photos (Cohan 2011). In contrast, the cost of a digital image became progressively smaller and smaller as the cameras developed. As the cost of the technology dropped and the general quality improved (through the density of pixels) for increasingly mobile cameras, the cost per picture ultimately became an absurd form of comparison between old and new technology and the closest identifiable cost per photo was perhaps the battery time and the electricity used. Neither of these “costs” were at all visible in taking a digital image. What has changed is the value of the individual image; in other words, digital technology allowed for infinitesimal plenitude in the production of photos and the material value of the photo to disappear as a factor in production. Indeed, even the viewing of photos no longer requires their printing; photos are often shared by viewing them on the technology itself, whether on a phone, a tablet or computer, and sent by email (see for example Kember 2012).

Thirdly, digital photography was also differently networked in terms of distribution. There is no question that from the earliest moments of professional photography in the nineteenth century, a photograph had the capacity to be reproduced and this meant that an individual image could appear hundreds and thousands of times in different settings and locations. For example, the school yearbook not only produced hundreds of photos of students, it also produced hundreds of copies of these photos for each album produced. Similarly, as newspapers became more reliant on images for the selling of their product, it is certainly true that images could be distributed very quickly by the photo/picture agencies that were servicing the daily needs of newspapers by the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite these quite incredible systems of distribution, like the relative cost and the instantaneity of digital photos, the contemporary electronic distribution of images is incomparably more diverse, more personalized and deals with sheer numbers of photo images that dwarf past models.

To get a sense of this difference in the contemporary moment of exposure, it is worth at least listing the volume of images that are now distributed through the most popular applications. By 2013, an estimated 250 billion photos had been uploaded to Facebook since their photo service was first launched (Robertson 2013; Wagner 2013), with more than 350 million new images uploaded per day (Crook 2013; Fiegerman 2013; Smith 2013). In 2014, Flickr, a service dedicated to photos, averaged 1.83 million photos shared per day (Michel 2015).

Sharing and networking image sites such as Tumblr, as forms of microblogging where images are sometimes collected thematically, are also locations for photos and photo-sharing. Similarly, Twitter allows users to post photos with its 140 character microblogging format that further extends the networking and the uploading of photos. Augmenting these still images of exposure are the shared videos that circulate in online culture. YouTube has a mixture of commercial and personal channels

with 300 hours of video uploaded every minute (YouTube 2015). Both Instagram and Twitter through Vine have expanded to short-form videos. On average, approximately 12 million 6-second Vine videos per day are shared on Twitter (Smith 2015). Instagram (2015) self-estimates that about 70 million new photos are uploaded daily among 300 million monthly active users. Snapchat, which allows photo and video “snaps” to be posted to friends and then the “snap” disappears, claims an upload rate greater than Facebook of over 700 million photo and video snaps as a younger generation redefines itself away from Facebook (Shontell 2014).

Even with the exclusion of videos, the volume of photos as well as the movement and sharing of photos means that what we have is quite different than any previous use of photography. Although we cannot claim that all these photos are “selfies” – as they are now referred to (Day 2013) – we can confidently claim that the images are exposures of the self indirectly or quite directly. The actual selfie has exploded into popular use since 2010 when front-facing phone cameras, such as the iPhone 4, made it possible to see your own image as you were taking the picture. The photograph has become a naturalized extension of the self; as Van Dijk (2008) points out, we have moved from photography used primarily as a tool for memory, to photography used primarily as a tool for the formation and tracking of self-identity. Our photo-sharing moves this new digital generation of the image into a technological apparatus that is transforming our construction of what is exposed publicly and what is held more privately.

Finally, from a technological perspective, it is also important to identify the relative ease in the manipulation of digital images. Barthes continues to be valuable in identifying the reality-effect of photos where the connotation, because of its clear indexical relationship to the real, gives it an authenticity and an ideological value (Barthes 2010; Barthes and Heath 1988); however, popular software such as Photoshop, along with a host of other even simpler applications for the manipulation of images, means that the capacity for shaping that reality beyond the image’s enclosed frame is ever present. Personal exposure through the digital image has to be understood on two levels. First, it is a normalized part of our everyday life to have self-images widely available. And second, the technology of transformation along with the technology of sharing and commenting means that the “anchoring” of an image, its fixing to a specific meaning, is always in potential flux and liquidity. These different “realities” of contemporary exposure will make more sense when investigated through the other meanings of exposure.

Publicity and the Emergence of Glamour

Exposure: Drawing attention of the general public. (*OED*, 2013)

The relationship between images and the public sphere has always been close. If we think simply of religious icons, we can see that their images conveyed a meaning to a populace and a sense of solidarity and belonging/exclusion through the shared images and symbols of a particular church and religion. Howells (2011) has taken

this one step further in his work and linked the celebrity image and its connection to the person as a contemporary form of holy relic: the photograph in all its structure of aura is a reference to the celebrity, a way to ritualistically and with reverence connect to the celebrity through the image. Beyond the technological capacities of fabricating and distributing images, exposure also refers to attracting the public's gaze. What is critical in understanding our current circulation and exchange of billions of images is that it relies on a system of communication that was built on a much more controlled and restrained movement of images – perhaps with a quality that tries to produce an almost religious value in the exposures produced. Those much more limited numbers of images functioned with much more power in the past and with greater capacity to draw our attention. For example, newspapers and magazines used news and day-defining images on their front pages and covers to attract the attention of a buying and subscribing public to their stories. These much more limited images were instrumental in shaping our public memory and our understanding of what was significant and important.

Contemporary exposure which involves hundreds of millions exposing themselves via online culture, in particular, is at least partially built on systems of individual exposure that have operated for the last century and more. These pedagogic models for contemporary exposure are drawn from the way in which the public personality has been displayed in various domains of popular and political culture. In politics, for instance, it is interesting that when Lyndon B. Johnson succeeded Kennedy as US President in November 1963, the only person who had unfettered access to him was his personal photographer, Yoichi Okamoto. Okamoto has claimed he took more than 11,000 pictures of the new president in his first three months in order to construct the public image (Keller 2011: 150–1).

In a similar vein, for both film culture and magazines, the public display of stars in films but also in publicity stills and posters was very much structured around building a code of glamour. Jackie Stacey's reading of female spectatorship points to how glamour in classical Hollywood identified beauty, success and luxury and became a marker of desire for women audience members (Stacey 1994: 151–159). This code of glamour was replicated in the opulence of movie theaters themselves as well as in the glossiness of women's fashion magazines. They represented pathways to identify and in some cases emulate film stars and celebrities. Glamour is generally, although not entirely, associated with a transformation of the female body through style, makeup and a construction of allure (Dyhouse 2010). It is a form of exposure that draws attention to the individual self in an active play with public performance of pleasure and seduction – and, as Gundle's work identifies, a symbolic transformation of class and cultural hierarchies explicitly expressed through the visible exposure of a glamorous new self (2008).

The twentieth-century construction of exposed glamour of the self populates most of the culture industries in some form or another. A long history of posters of famous women from various entertainment industries has been the lifeblood of the poster industry of the twentieth century. From the pinup girls drawn from film stars in the 1940s to the male and female rock icons of the 1970s and 1980s (one can think of “glam rock” as specifically cross-gendering the notion of glamour itself), the poster

has been a form of exploited and celebrated form of exposure of the public self. In some ways, this entire construction of public glamour reached its zenith in the 1990s in the celebration of the supermodel, where the fashion models moved well beyond their role in that industry into celebrity status itself. Modeling became enough of a form of exposure of the self to engender the attention of the public: supermodels such as Linda Evangelista, Claudia Schiffer, Elle Macpherson and Kate Moss became as recognizable as any film or television star (see for example, Hartley 2007; Gundle 2008).

Perhaps where one can see the pedagogic movement best between the celebrated constellation of images and posters and the new everyday exposure of the self is through the professional intermediaries. What has grown since the 1990s is a new form of professional photography that caters for the transformation of the individual into a “star.” In Australia’s shopping centers and malls, for example, the studio Starshots advertises itself as capturing “the essence of you.” The philosophy of this national franchise is outlined on its website: “so much more than perfect photographs, by employing our proven formula of makeup, hairstyling and studio photo shoot with a variety of different looks we are able to produce the perfect glamour portraits for our clients” (Starshots 2015). Part of the “Starshot experience” is to allow the client to be “pampered” with stylists and designers, along with props and accessories, to make the experience itself as valuable as the resultant photographs. The photographs produced are in the lineage of glamour photography that naturally offers the added service of touch-ups and digitally altering images to capture the “real you.” In a more everyday way, this form of photography reproduces what Weber (2009) has described as makeover television.

Glamour photography is positioned at the intersection of celebrity and the celebration of the techniques of constructing celebrity exposure. In other words, its market is to “intermediate” one world of the everyday with another world – the extraordinary – via the images produced. Clients are looking for a star experience, but these companies also cater for the production of publicity stills for those aspiring to be fashion or photographic models, and at least potentially the exposure is a modern *carte de visite* into the media world. In its most extreme forms, glamour photography positions the female body for pornographic display: the aesthetic resembles the history of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines. In its more mundane iterations, glamour photography at the shopping mall tries for what the photographer Chris Nelson advises in his guide to glamour photography: “have it as your goal to exceed the perception she has of herself when she looks in the mirror” (Nelson 2013: 9). Other professional studios catering for the consumer market try to produce for the “family” portrait a feeling that their photo-shoot resembles those of celebrity feature stories in magazines. Verve, another studio franchise, is expert at making their portraits distinctive and different in their clear appeal to the aesthetic of magazine photography. Embedded in their thinking is a combination of the portraiture of Karsh with the work of Annie Leibovitz: it is magazine cover photography for the middle class and its slogan captures this intermediary role: “art inspired by you.” Their appeal is alluring: “Each piece of Verve artwork is as individual as your family and designed to suit your home. The beautiful images captured from your photography session

are handcrafted into creative, original works of art” (Verve 2013). Indeed, during the family portrait session they promise that “you will reconnect to your family like never before” as the glamour and specialness of the experience draws you into a world of feeling significant and famed.

Imagining oneself as part of the public world identifies the expansion of this sophisticated newer generation of portrait photography. It relies on the models of images in the public that circulated for most of the last century and then retools their use for a wider populace. Quite directly, this form of professional photography describes another dimension of what Graeme Turner (2010) refers to as the “demotic” as opposed to “democratic” turn in the media where increasingly the audience becomes the source for media stories, as in reality television; however, in this particular case of glamour portrait photography, production is operating at a level of desire and use that rarely moves back into the larger media systems. What can be discerned from this will-to-an-image-of-fame is that it is a reliance on a “public” conception of mediated photography – a new aesthetic of what constitutes both value and beauty. Possessing that construction of value allows one’s own self to be incorporated into the contemporary media system, albeit only for display in the family’s bedrooms and living rooms.

Self-Branding

Exposure: Exhibition and presentation as in goods or products. (*OED*, 2013)

In many ways, what has been developing in the past two decades is an increasing normalization of exposure of the self in public. The entertainment industries have once again served as a herald for this new exposure of the self, and more than any other sector they actively developed and constructed the value of the individual’s contribution to any cultural commodity. In the film industry, this model of self-employment, buttressed by the work of agents, followed the classical Hollywood studio era and demarcated the decline of contract players and the rise of stars and their role in organizing future film production (Marshall 1997: 82–6). In essence, by the 1950s, stars such as Gregory Peck, Bette Davis, or James Stewart were independent from the traditional studio model and were brought into any production on a project-by-project basis. In the past half-century, this system of production has become the norm in Hollywood, where stars are calibrated in terms of their individual value to a production and often organize payment for their contribution partially upfront and partially as a percentage of the box office takings. In other words, major film stars have made themselves into recognizable businesses as they have worked hard to “brand” themselves as a commodity that is purchased because of their capacity to attract the attention and patronage of audiences. Their perceived “quality” as a brand is dependent on their ability to choose appropriate projects: their presence in a film then becomes a guarantor of quality and a very major way in which audiences can anticipate the pleasure and enjoyment they will get from a particular film.

Exposure of the celebrity self has been further accentuated through what is termed celebrity endorsement. Celebrities sell their own constructed value to other companies to sell other products. Celebrity endorsements have had a long history and identify a practice that stars and their agents adopt to give their incomes some autonomy from their primary activity. Currid-Halkett (2010) identifies this power and value of a celebrity in economic terms as a “celebrity residual”: something beyond their talent cultivated in our media economy by certain personalities. This extra value of a personality is then translated into all sorts of domains, which are capitalized upon by the celebrity and in turn by the associated products.

The model of association whereby celebrity residuals produce a new economy has involved enormous energies in branding the public self that have gone well beyond the original autonomy that emerged in the film industry more than 50 years ago. In terms of sheer exposure of celebrities, certain products have been encouraged to become highly personalized and closely associated with particular individuals, to a point where there is an indexical connotation between the product and the celebrity. For example, the image of George Clooney has been inextricably linked with Nespresso, the coffee pod system for Italian-style coffee at home, since 2006. Bus shelter advertisements as much as prefilm commercials provide a ubiquity of association which maintains an image of both status and elegance that makes the product and the star indistinguishable and serves to accentuate the reputation of the star. In a similar vein, watchmakers have also made celebrities “models” of their gear (Rojek 2012: 93). Leonardo DiCaprio has been associated since 2009 with Tag Heuer, posing in several variations with the watch on his knuckles and wrist. As watches have lost their own universal value to the clock function of the ever-present mobile phone, the watch has become a form of status symbol. Watch manufacturers use celebrities as much as celebrities use the watch company to convey a mutual sense of value and prestige. The James Bond franchise – currently starring Daniel Craig – has been associated with Omega since 1995 and uses the association, as with other brands, for the notion of quality (Omega, 2015). For the star, whether Pierce Brosnan or Daniel Craig, it maintains a flattering image that stylistically reflects a relation to quality.

The branding of the public self demonstrated by these products is a kind of “static” image where the celebrity is idealized both in the formation of serious expression and depth and in the sheer quality of the image itself. It is a controlled presentation of the self that reveals only what is perceived to be the essence of beauty and, in many meanings of the word, value. This appeal to a utopian version of the self is epitomized in the perfume industry (and by association in fashion and cosmetics more widely) and the connection to personalities is overwhelming and ultimately highly personal. Fragrance and scent are some of the key signs of intimacy. The attachment of commercial perfumes to alluring stars moves what is intimate into a public display of desire. The eyes invite the individual into their provocative though highly controlled expressions of masculinity and femininity. Moving through the perfume and cosmetics section of a department store or airport duty-free shopping precincts shows the extent of the exposure that celebrities have permitted. Modeling for Bvlgari Man Extreme fragrance in 2013 is the internationally renowned Australia actor

Eric Bana. Jared Leto, a minor actor and an independent music star, associates with the edgy Hugo Boss fragrance called Red that tries to connect to his own independence: the tag line draws us to this male edge with the slogan “Red means go.” Ryan Reynolds has modeled since 2009 another brand of Boss fragrance, Bottled, in classic Bond-like poses that celebrate a suit-empowered and status-filled persona, in contrast to his generally comic screen identity (Chen 2012). The dimensions of female fragrances attempt to match the spectrum of idealized femininity and its construction of fashion and glamour. Julia Roberts and Penelope Cruz look outward at us as representatives of Lancôme, while Keira Knightley through Coco and Nicole Kidman for No. 5 seduce us for Chanel. Dior through J’adore aligns with Charlize Theron both in fragrance and dress, while Beyoncé has given her cachet to the True Star fragrance of American clothing brand Tommy Hilfiger, a division of Estée Lauder. The list of fashion/cosmetic/fragrance connections to recognizable stars is very long and highly personal and beyond Photoshop in their depiction of ideal selves (see Kubartz 2011).

Beyond their perfection and control, these images point to the celebration of the branded self. When one begins to explore our contemporary world through shopping malls, city centers and downtowns, and through public transport, these public images of famous people are literally ubiquitous in their larger-than-life poses and in their placement of images on every surface imaginable. Augmenting these images are the thousands of model images attached to products, and what we see is an overwhelming display of the public self (figure 27.1). This has become an acceptable dimension of exposure of the self for it underlines the inherent value and the capacity of the individual to draw attention. The celebrity exposure through product endorsements has to be seen then as leading a culture towards a legitimate exposure of the self and an accentuation that recognition is the marker of contemporary value. The earnings of any of the public figures attached to perfumes is incredible and represents a marker of their “value.” For instance Nicole Kidman earned \$4 million per year for a three year global TV and print campaign for Chanel in 2006 and these figures of millions are associated with most celebrities involved in perfumes (CBS News 2006) (Beltrone 2014).

The level of exposure of public personalities has provided at least a model for the organization of the self more widely. The recognition culture that operates as a form of economic value in this wider culture industry is similarly the model through which the populace begins to calibrate their own value. The branding of the self through exposure fits into the contemporary work world where employment has become much more temporary (the average job tenure in the US was 4.6 years in 2014; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014) and much more contingent (according to recent surveys workers expect to be employed at their current job for less than three years) (Meister 2012). Greater portions of the labor market are employed on short-term contracts; this places an obligation on the individual to build a portfolio of experiences and jobs that resemble the way an actor builds their career from role to role. Increasingly, portfolios presenting the work identity and the recognition of past work are now the way that future work can be best guaranteed. The collective workforce is being individualized through the necessity to sell oneself.



Figure 27.1 Hair dye models' idealized selfie-like poses on supermarket shelves

Exposure has become one of the norms of contemporary culture specifically because it is connected to economic value and self-worth. Online culture perhaps best expresses the comfort with which people now expose themselves and brand their identities. Facebook, Skype, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, and many other forms of social media invite users to complete their profile through uploading their picture. Many play with this identity construction by providing avatars, drawn or false images; but vastly more upload what they perceive as a good representation of themselves. Facebook and Twitter profile images are populated with smiling people in happy settings or in poses that express how they want others to perceive them. Although these self-photos for profiles are rarely as beautifully constructed as those of the celebrities used to endorse products, they are chosen with consideration and care and they mean something. When they are changed for new photos, there is usually an attempt to capture some aspect of the self – humor, seriousness, professionalism – and the exposed self provides something of a match to the public identity that the individual wants to inhabit. The exposure then is matched with the written profile provided of schools and positions, along with likes and dislikes, and these become the formations of the constructed and branded contemporary self.

Paparazzi and Risk

Exposure: Revealing publicly / Indecent exposure/scandal; as in a Dangerous Asset. (OED, 2013)

The constructed images of celebrity endorsements represent the controlled and desirable form of exposure in contemporary culture in its capacity to present the best possible image, but in a world of billions of cameras and numerous possibilities of distribution the capacity to control what kind of “profile” of ourselves is publicly available entails risks. Two of the definitional variations of exposure identify the dangers of “revealing publicly” and link the practice with both “indecent” and “scandal.” Embedded in the definition of exposure is a normative sensibility around propriety in what forms of revelation of the self are permissible.

Scandal and indecency identify the unintentional movement of the private into the public and sometimes the political. Once again this domain of activity has been the province of celebrity media coverage for more than a century and provides the *frame* of how this relationship to the negative aspects of exposure is negotiated as part of a public life. What appears to be a straightforward position – that is, one where the celebrity controls their image and this becomes the ideal – does not necessarily make sense in a culture where recognition and attention provide evident economic and other forms of value. Lull and Hinerman claim that “the media scandal disturbs the conventional distinction made between guilt and shame.” In its exposure of the private to the public, “the media scandal disembeds human actions and recontextualizes them into far-reaching, symbolic realities” (1997: 26). Thompson’s work on political scandal identifies the implications of mediatization and its technologies in the production of a new level of public visibility (2000). News media generally are complicit in the production of scandal and the technological capacity of new media to “reveal” and to “expose” is an essential part of its business of creating what can be described as discursive sensations. Ponce de Leon’s history of twentieth-century American “human interest” journalism points to the emergence in the 1920s of gossip columnists such as Walter Winchell and their associated pictures of the pantheon of the famous as critical to the development of both positive and negative stories about celebrities as a way to construct a kind of gossip news report of recognizable people (2002: 53–4). In other words, scandal and gossip were not only ways of producing news events, they were also sometimes the manner in which attention on a particular celebrity could be maintained for the advantage of the celebrity. Negative news as much as, and sometimes more than, positive news still attracts the attention of the camera to the individual.

Over the course of the twentieth century, photography by paparazzi, an entirely new profession and industry of photography, developed around the possibility of exposing the famous. Sometimes indecently and sometimes favorably, but always with the intention of linking the captured uniqueness of the image to the flows of an attention economy fueled by the media and its economic imperatives, these photographers worked the new exigencies of the attention economy. The term paparazzi

is derived from the name of the photographer Paparazzo in Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita* and his activities in capturing images. Camping out and stalking were elemental to the trade of paparazzi as they worked to expose celebrities when they least expected it (Fossard forthcoming). The paparazzis' objective was to engage with the activity that Dyer described as critical to the relationship between the audience and the star: to reveal or expose the "real" person behind the celebrity persona (1998: 23–4). The industry has been driven by freelance work by individuals and pathways to publications provided by photo agencies. Australian photographer Darren Lyons's description of his seminal moment in the industry typifies its structure:

My first experience with the royals was right after I arrived in London: I covered Prince William's first day at school. There were about 150 photographers there in the morning and everyone shot the proceedings, but I hung around at the back door for the rest of the day and got a shot of the young prince leaving for home. I was the only photographer to get something that was informal and natural and it was my first exclusive. I sold the picture to *The Express*, who paid me £75 for it – at that point I had no idea how to negotiate. They used it big and then I took it to an agency, Rex Features, who syndicated it for me ... (2009: 26)

Through their images, paparazzi developed into a trade that challenged all sorts of conventions related to private and public space. The photographers themselves are sometimes vilified for their efforts but also are seen as a kind of vanguard of journalism in their push to complete exposure and disclosure of the rich, powerful, and famous, where the potential for their fall is made visible (for example, see Mendelson 2007). McNamara's work has explored these dimensions between celebrities' control of their images and spaces and those of the paparazzi (2005). The battles over control of images have often pitted stars against publishers and presented deeply contested challenges to intellectual property. In McNamara's more recent work, she has investigated the new economies of paparazzi photography. In that study, what is interesting in terms of our culture of exposure is that McNamara identifies that more "candid" images are circulating through online culture as international photo agencies (such as Getty Images) now appropriate images from a wider range of professional and amateur digital image production (2011: 518). In conjunction with the work of amateurs, professional photographers have worked with more sophisticated and truly penetrating telephoto technology to capture the hidden worlds of celebrities. The combination of the invasive activity of the most adept paparazzi with the work of amateurs presents an entire world of surveillance for high profile contemporary celebrities. An array of images of quite varying quality now populate celebrity-inspired magazines (figure 27.2) and through their cover iconography are meant to look as if they are out of control, expressing this as a predominant connotation (figure 27.3).

At the very extreme end of exposure are the celebrity pornography sites. The images collected of the most famous stars are an interesting mélange of what appear to be authentic images of nude or seminude performances alongside digitally altered nude and sexually explicit versions. The risk of fame and publicity is that one's image



Figure 27.2 The celebrity magazine rack: out of control

can be altered completely. The precursors of this redeployment of images were in magazines such as *Celebrity Skin* or *Celebrity Sleuth*: these earlier configurations of nude or partially nude images presented them as authentic, whether through the work derived from the probing paparazzi telephoto lens, isolation of a nude moment in a film, or the inadvertent leak of illicit photos before celebrities were famous (Knee 2006). Currently, celebrity fakes are acknowledged very clearly as fabricated, partially



Figure 27.3 The chaos aesthetic of the celebrity magazine cover

to avoid litigation. Nonetheless, the celebrity fake porn image is everywhere and captures every famous person. At the same time as debates in 2013 proliferated about Miley Cyrus's highly constructed and popular video where she appeared carefully nude on a wrecking ball or twerking at the VM Awards with Robyn Thicke, there were many (digitally altered) photos on a number of websites that exposed much more of the performer in what can only be described as hard-core pornographic poses. In this world of image exposure, the attention economy produces all sorts of associated residual values that can only be arrested through an appeal to privacy and intellectual property laws.

As exposure has become even more generalized in contemporary culture, celebrity negotiation with this out-of-control marketplace of images can be clearly identified as the herald of how photographs populate social media networks in everyday life. The risks that celebrities deal with – that an image that appears to be harmful in terms of content could also be a source of both attention and value – are exactly what is explored via Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. Moral panics are emerging around the control of this level of exposure, and they are particularly focused on

youth culture. “Sexting” – the exchange of sexually explicit images of oneself, usually through mobile devices – represents an extreme form of exposure and the most extreme form of attracting attention, as well as perhaps the greatest recent moral panic in spite of much less evidence of its prevalence (Mitchell et al. 2012). Sites have manifested themselves where the nude selfie is collected from willing participants intent on their image being “liked” in a new competitive and comparative game of recognition and attention-seeking. On a much more mundane level is the use of Facebook as an archive for photos. Walls on Facebook are populated with an array of images that – particularly in youth culture, but also more broadly – are often perceived as harmless in their exposé of a particular night out by an individual; however, this form of publicity is not necessarily limited to friends and families. The risk of exposure in contemporary culture has produced a series of panics that regularly populate journalistic reports. For example, 31 percent of American university and college admission officers surveyed in 2013 by a company preparing students for college entry tests used Facebook and Google to screen applicants. The same survey found that officers reported a 5 percent decline from 2012 to 2013 (from 35 to 30 percent) in discovering negative information about an applicant (Kaplan 2013; Urist 2013). Similar reports and fears have circulated as employers have used personal Facebook sites of potential employees to determine their suitability. These developments in combination underline the potential risk as well as the growing efforts of youth to cover up the visibility and searchability of risky or what may be perceived as scandalous behavior.

Whether from the perspective of the celebrity or the wider online culture, exposure entails risks. The risks can be defined in economic terms as one of the original definitions of exposure identifies that exposure means an association with “dangerous assets.” The desire for recognition and the capacity to produce, exhibit, and transform images in contemporary culture draw us into a culture of potential exposure that always has the potential to no longer produce a positive “residual” value for the self.

Conclusion – Specularity

Exposure: Subjected to an external influence. (*OED*, 2013)

“Subjected to an external influence” is one of the definitions of exposure. The examples given in the Oxford dictionary refer to how heat or cold or, in a more general sense, the elements impact on the individual: one is exposed to climatic extremes from which the body, without some form of protection, is at risk of damage or even death. This meaning of exposure, although perhaps overly dramatic, best summarizes the cultural transformation that this chapter has both identified and investigated through the various related definitions of exposure. As explored through the technological dimensions of photography, the contemporary moment has allowed a surplus economy of exposures of the self and a normalization of the distribution of our image widely through social networks.

In a very real sense, this culture of exposure has externalized our identification and our understanding of contemporary value. Deeply embedded in this personal exposure regime is an identificatory trope derived from more than a century of celebrity culture and its production of images, attention, and recognition. Our self-identity is externally structured by the values of attraction, attention and recognition that have been promulgated through the media of fame, visibility and reputation. The celebrity industry developed into a culture of self-branding and self-commodification and what we have witnessed in the last decade is the expansion of the exigencies of branding the self and making one's activities visible and noticeable.

In previous work, I have developed the concept of *presentational media* to describe the way in which online culture has provided this focus on the self as the agent in the production and dissemination of media and communication (Marshall 2010a; 2014: 160–1). What needs to be added to this concept is that there are a myriad of external pressures associated with its agency. For example, the use of any social network online generates information about the self as the content moves into a liminal world of ownership. Despite privacy settings, the content itself is both in the private world of the user *and* the private property of the social network company. What this resembles is exactly the liminal state of celebrities. The work of celebrities is usually associated with specific cultural commodities that have their own property into which their value has been appropriated, at the same time as celebrities actively develop their own brand and property. The celebrity public self as much as this wider public version of ourselves in online culture is subjected to – and surrounded by – this external economy and the level of agency of the self is constrained by these external forces and influences. In online culture, the industry aggregates all the exposed information we provide, and this allows it to generate tailored announcements and advertisements that intersect with our interests and desires. In addition, it ostensibly has control of the content we have uploaded if it is needed for other forms of aggregation. In celebrity culture, aggregation is differently constituted but is generally in terms of the size of the attracted audience that the celebrity can generate and this aggregation determines the economic power of the celebrity in future possible cultural production.

When compiling these external influences, what we can see in this broadened expanse of the public self there is a process of internalization of value and of risk. Like the star preparing for their public performance, we look into the mirror and determine whether what we are exposing makes sense and has the appropriate impact and effect and acceptable level of risk. The internalization process has expanded as the level of public exposure has grown exponentially: we look at the mirror as if others are looking at us, following us, trying to be our friend in our social networked space, continuously and relentlessly. The specularity of contemporary culture (Marshall 2010b) is the new panopticon, as the gap between the former public world and our own internal world narrows. Celebrity becomes more than just a show and provider of points of identification; celebrity provides the guide for the contemporary condition of exposure of the self.

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